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INTELLIGENCE NOTE

BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

May 19, 1972

SOUTH VIETNAM: THIEU UNLIKELY TO WIN EMERGENCY POWERS



President Nguyen van Thieu has asked the South Vietnamese legislature to grant him authority to rule by decree for six months in order to deal with the military crisis. Though overshadowed by military and diplomatic developments, Thieu's request for these "emergency powers" poses a constitutional and political dilemma of major importance. It seems unlikely to be granted unless Thieu can overcome skepticism that he is using the military crisis to enhance the executive's already powerful position vis-a-vis the legislature. Thieu's unwillingness thus far to agree to any modification of the emergency powers bill reinforces this skepticism. In any event, the regime's rationale for the bill -- to demonstrate national unity and evoke a sense of crisis -- has already been vitiated by the emergence of substantial opposition.

The Dilemma. Few, if any, South Vietnamese legislators doubt that national survival is presently at stake, but many also doubt that the proper answer to the North Vietnamese challenge is virtual abdication in favor of the executive for the duration of the military crisis. These "moderates" argue that the regime already has, under martial law authority granted in 1968 (and invoked for the first time on May 11) and legislation

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GROUP 1

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By 12/18/01, NARA, Date 3/13/00

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from the Diem era, ample powers to mobilize the country to cope with foreseeable threats. They see Thieu's request as a wrenching of constitutional strictures, threatening a slide toward autocracy. Nonetheless, centrist legislators would much prefer to meet President Thieu halfway: their position, as expressed by South Vietnam's leading newspaper, is that "total approval would make a shambles of the legal democratic regime, while total rejection would show that the president enjoys no support at this critical moment."

For its part, the regime has not argued convincingly its need for authority to rule by decree. Publicly it has intimated that it contemplates no radical departures from current policies; privately, regime figures have mentioned only authority to adjust the exchange rate for students studying abroad and to levy new income and property taxes as matters requiring new decrees. Opposition leaders have countered by promising speedy action on any specific measure the government deems essential.

Senate Approval Unlikely. The emergency powers bill passed the Lower House of the legislature on May 14 by the unusually narrow margin of 82-59. It seems headed for defeat, or substantial revision, in the Senate. Regime stalwarts could possibly muster the two-thirds Lower House majority needed to override Senate disapproval. If the Senate passes the bill with amendments, Thieu might in turn pose his own amendments and try to squeak out the simple majority of the full



membership of both houses meeting in joint session needed to sustain such action. In either case, a quid pro quo would probably be necessary: possibly some broadening of the GVN to include spokesmen from one or more of the independent blocs, or perhaps -- as occasionally in the past -- substantial bribes to less-principled deputies. However, one well-placed source indicates that if the emergency powers bill fails in the Senate, the regime is prepared to "stretch existing powers to the limit" rather than attempt to rescue the new legislation.

Crisis Prompts Thieu to Court Catholics. For reasons not entirely clear, until early this month Thieu balked at increasingly urgent suggestions that he dramatize the mortal threat posed by the North Vietnamese offensive. Worry that he might prompt a panicky and defeatist reaction apparently figured in his hesitation. Thieu also seems to have been irked by advice that he foster national unity by embracing old antagonists -- e.g., erstwhile presidential candidates Ky and Minh, the Buddhists, and those Catholic leaders who opposed his handling of his re-election -- and render obeisance to the authority of the legislature. But after Quang Tri fell on May 1, Thieu apparently considered an ad hoc rapprochement with the Buddhists, a more permanent mending of relations with the Catholics, and an appearance before a joint session of the National Assembly.

Of these contemplated reversals of form, only the approach to the Catholics reached the action stage. The Catholic bloc is the key to the



Senate, holding the balance of power between the government bloc and the usually anti-government Buddhist bloc. In recent years the Catholics have grown disenchanted with the Thieu regime, shifting gradually toward moderate opposition and frequent tactical alliance with the Buddhists. Thieu's reaction to this development has vacillated between wrath at "betrayal" and confidence that eventually the Catholics would return unbidden to the fold. Thieu's ardent courting of Catholic support is in his view a major concession, and he is doubtless chagrined that Catholic leader (and Senate Chairman) Nguyen van Huyen has, apparently, declined to commit his bloc to support the emergency powers bill.

Thieu Sounds The Tocsin. While seeking Catholic support for the emergency powers legislation, Thieu decided to act unilaterally in other areas to bolster the nation's sagging morale. His moves were vigorous and apparently effective, but they nonetheless undercut the regime's efforts to win authority to rule by decree. Thieu sacked several generals, including two of the four regional commanders (a unanimous Senate resolution endorsed the military shakeup). He reiterated orders that looters and arsonists be shot on sight. A few days later, surprised and deeply gratified by the US decision to interdict North Vietnam, Thieu seized the opportunity to give a much-needed accounting of the military situation to the South Vietnamese



people. "The nation is in danger," Thieu declared, and he called for sacrifices and a moratorium on "politics" for the duration of the crisis. Martial law was declared a day later, and Mayor Thieu startled Saigonese with a sobering report on local civil defense preparations.

Bill Put On Take-It-Or-Leave-It Basis. In this altered context, the emergency powers bill lost much of its intended shock effect. Moreover, critics were undeniably piqued, and Thieu's legislative lieutenants disappointed, when after his May 9 radio-TV speech Thieu cancelled plans to address the legislature and, in meetings with several groups of deputies, made it clear that he would accept no changes in the bill. He flatly rejected hints from moderate factions that they would swallow the emergency powers grant if, for example, it were amended to require post-crisis legislative ratification of all emergency decrees.

With a mutually satisfactory compromise seemingly unattainable, the emergency powers bill is likely to die in the Senate. If so, South Vietnamese moderates will have prevailed in an important -- even if little noted -- test, but at some cost to Thieu's prestige and to prospects of executive-legislative cooperation in the future. The Palace-Senate impasse underscores the importance which South Vietnamese moderates attach to preservation of the hard-won

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- 6 -

constitutional order. Unfortunately, it appears also to dramatize President Thieu's tendency to alienate potential supporters and his seeming inability, or unwillingness, to broaden his political base.

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 10678 191654Z

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ADJUTANT
CHIEF OF STAFF
SECY FOR DEFENSE
SECY FOR AID
SECY FOR INT AFF
SECY FOR EAS
SECY FOR WEA
SECY FOR OAS
SECY FOR S&P
SECY FOR INT AFF
SECY FOR EAS
SECY FOR WEA
SECY FOR OAS
SECY FOR S&P

1. IN THE COURSE OF A CALL ON VICE PRESIDENT HUONG WITH WHITE-HOUSE YESTERDAY, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS HIS ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH.

2. THE VICE PRESIDENT STATED THAT HE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THAT THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION WAS THE MAJOR FLAW IN SOUTH VIET-NAM TODAY. IN THE COURSE OF A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT THIEU, THE VICE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE HAD POINTED OUT THAT THE REASON CHINA HAD FALLEN TO THE COMMUNISTS WAS THE RAMPANT

CORRUPTION WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE CHIANG KAI-SHEK REGIME. HE BELIEVES THAT UNLESS DRAMATIC AND URGENT MEASURES ARE PUT INTO EFFECT IN SOUTH VIET-NAM, IT MIGHT WELL SUFFER THE SAME FATE.

3. THE VICE PRESIDENT WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED WITH THE INVESTIGATION WHICH HAS BEEN CONDUCTED ON THE SMASF (SERVICEMEN'S MUTUAL AID AND SAVINGS FUND) SCANDAL. IN REPLY TO A QUESTION WITH REGARD TO THE ACTIONS WHICH WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THE GUILTY OFFICERS, THE VICE PRESIDENT STATED THAT HE WAS SUBMITTING A 50-PAGE ANALYSIS TO PRESIDENT THIEU IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS WHICH RECOMMENDED THE LEGAL AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS WHICH SHOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THE PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE SMASF SCANDAL.

4. THE VICE PRESIDENT REPEATEDLY STRESSED THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK WITH WHICH HE HAS BEEN CHARGED, ALTHOUGH HE GETS

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 10678 191654Z

SOME FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM PRESIDENT THIEU'S SECRET FUNDS, HE IS GREATLY HANDICAPPED BY LACK OF STAFF AND LACK OF FUNDS. HE POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS HARD TO FIND INCORRUPTIBLE AND BOLD OFFICERS TO WORK IN THIS FIELD AND THAT THE CORRUPTIBILITY OF MAGISTRATES MADE IT VERY DIFFICULT TO GET CONVICTIONS.

5. I DREW THE VICE PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT AMERICAN SUPPORT OF THE "CORRUPT THIEU REGIME" WOULD BE A CAMPAIGN ISSUE AND THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE GVN TO TAKE VIGOROUS MEASURES AGAINST CORRUPTION PROMPTLY. I ALSO EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT AS THE INTENSITY OF THE ENEMY OFFENSIVE DIMINISHED IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR THE GVN TO KICK OFF AN AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN IN THIS FIELD. THE VICE PRESIDENT AGREED THAT AN INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN WAS DESIRABLE BUT POINTED OUT THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME PRESIDENT THIEU HAD TO MAKE USE OF COMPETENT AND BRAVE OFFICERS EVEN IF THEY WERE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAN. WHEN THE MILITARY SITUATION PERMITTED IT, SUCH OFFICERS SHOULD BE RELIEVED. IN THIS CONTEXT THE VICE PRESIDENT STATED THAT IT WAS IN PART THANKS TO HIS EFFORTS THAT GENERALS LAM AND DZU HAD BEEN REPLACED. HE ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO THE RECENT REMOVAL OF THE VINH LONG PROVINCE CHIEF ON CHARGES OF CORRUPTION.

6. THE VICE PRESIDENT APPEARED TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH, BUT IT SEEMS TO ME UNLIKELY THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO DO MUCH MORE IN THIS FIELD THAN HE HAS IN THE PAST, GIVEN HIS LACK OF STAFF AND FUNDS UNLESS THESE CONDITIONS ARE REMEDIED. THIS CAN ONLY COME ABOUT THROUGH VIGOROUS BACKING AND SUPPORT FROM PRESIDENT THIEU.

7. I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRING UP THE MATTER WITH THIEU ONCE AGAIN IN MEETING WITH HIM TODAY AND TO IMPRESS HIM WITH NEED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SUPPORT TO THE VICE PRESIDENT. I SAID THAT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY HAD TOP PRIORITY AND THAT IT WAS IMPERATIVE FOR HIM TO MAKE USE OF COMPETENT AND COURAGEOUS OFFICERS EVEN THOUGH SOME OF THEM MIGHT BE KNOWN TO BE CORRUPT. FOR EXAMPLE THE APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL TOAN AS COMMANDER IN II CORPS AND COLONEL THO, PROVINCE CHIEF OF BINH DINH, IN REPLACEMENT OF COLONEL CHUC, WHO HAD BEEN RESPECTED BY THE SOLDIERS AND ADMIRER BY THE HONEST CITIZENS OF THE PROVINCE. THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT GENERAL TOAN AND COLONEL THO WERE ABLE,

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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 10678 191654Z

AGGRESSIVE, AND EFFECTIVE COMMANDERS AND THEIR ABILITIES HAD TO BE USED. HOWEVER, WHEN THE MILITARY SITUATION PERMITTED IT, OFFICERS KNOWN FOR CORRUPTION SHOULD BE RELIEVED. IT IS EVIDENT THAT THOSE COMMANDERS WHO ARE NOT ONLY COMPETENT AND EFFECTIVE, BUT ALSO KNOWN FOR THEIR INTEGRITY AND HONESTY COMMAND THE GREATEST LOYALTY AND RESPECT ON THE PART OF THEIR FORCES AND HENCE ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE - MEN LIKE GENERAL TRUONG - AND THERE ARE MANY SUCH IN THE VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES. BUT IT IS NOT ONLY IN THE MILITARY, BUT ELSEWHERE THAT THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION NEEDS TO BE ATTACKED IN AN ENERGETIC AND FORTHRIGHT MANNER. WITH A POLITICAL CONTEXT IN THE OFFING, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THIS SHOULD BE DONE WITHOUT DELAY.

8. THIEU AGREED THAT THE PROBLEM WAS IMPORTANT AND THAT HE INTENDED TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE VICE PRESIDENT'S ACTIONS. ONCE THE MILITARY SITUATION WAS IN HAND, THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION WOULD BE TACKLED MORE BROADLY.
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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon
Elliot Richardson, Secretary of Defense
The Joint Chiefs of Staff
Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Thursday, February 15, 1973
1:00 p.m.

PLACE: The Pentagon

President: You know, I am known as following a "hard line," and in the Presidential campaign my opponent took a soft line.

Without the ABM, we would not have had a SALT agreement. In addition, there were many in Congress who wanted to "bug out" from Vietnam, and there were many close votes on that issue. Had those efforts succeeded, our POWs would have come home to a defeated country.

What I'm getting at is the growing strength of isolationism in the United States. This tendency is fed by the information media. But still, thank God we don't have government television, putting out just one line.

Other countries have to have the support of the peaceniks to survive. During the recent bombing, the only ones to stand with us were the British, the Germans, and the Turks. All the others took a cheap shot at the bombing. Trudeau, Tanaka, Schmidt. The bombings in World War II killed millions but that was a "good war." This is a "bad war," so the bombing was "evil." There is a real double standard, and isolationism is rampant.

Clinking glasses with the Chinese and the Soviet leaders wasn't friendship but mutual interests. We talk to both countries, not to divide them but to seek sound relations with them. We must realize, however,

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NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept Guidelines
By 64, NARA, Date 11/18/00

that good relations don't come simply from knowing other people better.

There is a tendency in the rimland of Asia and elsewhere to tell the U.S. to go home. But Indonesia and Suharto don't. Should this develop in the NATO countries, or should they reduce their forces, the Congress will jump at the chance to cut all NATO forces. We are in danger of not getting enough from Congress, and Europe will encourage these forces which will want us to come home. We would like to be able to put the DOD budget into welfare, but if we did, the world would eventually fall under the Communist system. Despite the setback in South Asia and pressure from Congress, the situation is not hopeless. That is what the Chinese and Soviet initiatives were all about. Expansion is an article of Communist faith, but so also is caution.

The Korean War was not about Korea, but basically about Japan. The U.S. stand in Korea was a water shed. So it is with Vietnam, although the domino theory is rejected. Vietnam was important not for itself but because of what it demonstrated in terms of support for our friends and allies and in terms of showing our will to our enemies. We had to see it through. I could have "bugged out" free in Vietnam after the '68 election, but we had to see it through -- but not necessarily the way it had been fought up to them. We have made strong moves in such crises as Jordan, Cienfuegos, etc. All these were important in demonstrating our commitments to our friends and our determination to our enemies.

I understand what vilification you, the military, have gone through over Vietnam, but you should remember that the big issue in the war was the American spirit.

I will conclude by saying that we must regain the respect for our military or we will end up with a country and a world which is unsafe. We must also remember and honor our POWs, our MIAs, all those killed or all those who served honorably in Vietnam.

Richardson: Thank you, Mr. President. You have put all our war commitments into proper perspective. The returning POWs have dramatically launched what DOD is trying to do to restore the military to its proper position. What more should be done for the POWs?

President: I raised the issue because I want to have the initiative. Congress might even say, "Give them all the Medal of Honor."



Adm. Moorer: The JCS have examined the idea of some sort of Presidential citation for those who were certified by the Services as deserving. I recommend we call it a POW Citation for those who honorably served.

President: Continue to think about this and develop a plan for appropriate recognition of the POWs for some sort of an award presentation in Washington. We should make it an individual rather than unit citation. I plan to invite POWs for dinner, and invitations would be extended to their wives or mothers. All of you should be there.

If too many stories come out about the bad treatment accorded our POWs, we could jeopardize the chances of getting aid to North Vietnam through the Congress. This would give us leverage with the North Vietnamese. It's important for our strategy. If the POWs rejected the idea of such aid, that would kill it in Congress.

Adm. Moorer: We will take care of this problem.

President: You all should talk privately to the "Hawks" in Congress -- like Long, Stennis, Goldwater -- to convince them of the necessity of aiding North Vietnam on a national interest basis, not through any idea of reparation or humanitarianism. Aid to North Vietnam should be pushed as an investment in peace. The leverage issue should not be specifically developed in discussions with Congress. I'm afraid the doves will oppose it because they think it would come out of welfare. Senator Mansfield is at least an "honest peacenik." I think he supports aid to North Vietnam.

Howard K. Smith has some good comments on this. But to go back to the POWs, I think we should attempt to keep those who are fit in the Services. The unfit, handle on a case-by-case basis. We don't want stories that they can't get jobs. Each Service should follow each man individually. They should be returned to the Service with an appropriate promotion, or found a job. They should, of course, receive the best possible medical care.

General Abrams: There is an Army POW who was released at least two years ago, who has been given everything possible but who can't hold a job. He enjoys being a hero. Some people just cannot be helped.

President: If any POW wanted government jobs, they should go through Scowcroft to Haldeman.



Richardson: Mr. President, I propose a toast to you and to your leadership and strength of purpose. [All toast.]

President: I have ordered a white orchid for each of the POWs' wives or mothers for them to wear in greeting their husbands or sons. Mrs. Nixon and you should do this. We don't want to exploit the POWs but to do what is appropriate.

We now have an invaluable opportunity to revise the history of this war. For eight years the press has called the Vietnam war immoral and those who went to Canada the moral ones. The amnesty people don't want forgiveness; they want justification.

Of course, on amnesty, there is the Lincoln precedent. But it's not an issue of vengeance or nonvengeance, simply justice.

One other point. I also want to stress that this will be the year of Europe, and we should, within the next two months, review NATO strategy.

I want to emphasize that I want not just a consensus but a variety of views on ground strategy for the years ahead. The State Department knew diplomacy not strategy, and the Defense Department vice versa. Fortunately, Elliot combines the knowledge of both fields. The Defense Department is full of smart people. It's important to let them know we need them and intend to use them.

There are a number of areas that need to be studied, such as our posture in Southeast Asia after Vietnam; Indonesia -- military and or more economic aid; Korea; the Fleet; the Middle East, Indian Ocean, and the energy crisis, for example.

I think the Nixon Doctrine has been largely misinterpreted. Mansfield, for example, thinks that it is a way to get out. It's not; it's a way to maintain our forces overseas but to get a decent effort from the countries supported, especially in terms of manpower. I want Defense involved, as well as State, in the upcoming study efforts.

Richardson: I have ordered a meeting to work out what we are doing, what are the gaps, and what we don't need to do again.

President: We will pay attention to your views.



Adm. Moorer: There are \$5 a day in war claims. We'll take no initiative, but don't propose it.

President: If Congress proposes, we won't oppose it unless it is outlandish.



MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION:

PARTICIPANTS:

President Ford
Bipartisan Congressional Leadership
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
and Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs
Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE & TIME:

Thursday - September 12, 1974
8:30 a.m.

PLACE:

Cabinet Room

SUBJECT:

Foreign Aid

President: I appreciate your coming and the cooperation you have given me. I was thinking last night of the many meetings I have been to, going back to LBJ, in this room on this problem. I want to talk on this problem for a minute and then Henry will talk. I meet with Henry every morning for over an hour. We face a number of difficult problems over the world. Whether it is Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or another part of the Mediterranean -- Greece and Turkey, where Henry is in daily contact with Greece and Turkey -- or the relationship with the Soviet Union where we are laying the groundwork for SALT and trade, or with Western Europe where we're trying to bring close cooperation, we are faced with problems and tough decisions. I wanted to get the Leadership together to lay out the problems with you.

That gets to legislation -- we must have what we need. On the defense appropriation, I appreciate what you have been able to do. In aid assistance there is a problem. We must assure that what we are trying to do in Vietnam is not destroyed through lack of funding or that our hands are not tied in using those funds. There are amendments which would limit me in emergencies. We need flexibility and an adequate amount of money.

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There is a prospect of increased military activity in Vietnam, and also in the Mideast. We went through a crisis in Cyprus. We hope there won't be anything else, but we must be prepared in case there is. Now let me turn it over to Henry and then I hope for a frank discussion.

Kissinger: I strongly support the President's statement about the opportunities we face in foreign policy. There is new leadership in Europe, and with our new situation, it has created a new atmosphere. The Soviet Union has gone out of its way to create a good atmosphere. In SALT we are facing the best prospects we have faced in some time. In the Mideast we are facing a difficult negotiation. It is difficult to phase them to show progress and prevent a blowup. We are pursuing a low profile with Greece and Turkey because passions run so high; we want to nudge them to negotiate so we will not be blamed for a collapse. We are making progress though. This is by way of background:

In Southeast Asia, there is the problem of money and restrictions. If we bug out of Vietnam, it would affect our whole foreign policy and the reliance that countries can place on us. If the amounts are too small, it matters little whether it is barely too little or much too little. In MAP, you know the requests and the appropriation.

President: I was discussing this a day or so ago. A soldier on patrol normally carries 8 grenades. Now they carry two. What does that do to the soldier's morale. Their morale inevitably sags and that at the least unsettles the situation in South Vietnam.

Kissinger: It is a vicious cycle. The psychology is as important as the military situation. Until June they felt good. Then their ammunition was reduced and their morale sagged. Then they gave up some outposts and their morale dropped more.

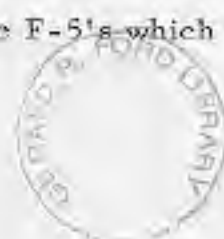
We think North Vietnam is on the brink of deciding whether or not to go the military route. To the extent we cut back, we encourage military action.

It is not a matter of economizing -- we don't have enough. We have done what we can. Unused equipment disintegrates rapidly.

We realize the funds are agreed.

Mahon: There is one area, though. There is \$77 million for the F-5's which can be used.

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Kissinger: We agree, but we will still have to come in for a supplemental. It's not enough.

On the economic side, the funds are totally inadequate. We gave a 5-year program and we said the worst way is to give just too little because you can never get a process of growth. \$600 million is the minimum to stabilize the situation. At the levels now the situation will be seriously jeopardized. Food and fuel costs have risen tremendously. This has to do with political stability. In June we were impressed with Ambassador Martin's report of progress. Now the impact of these cutbacks is turning the situation around. The situation is a disaster.

Stennis: The actual facts as I understand. The money until now has come out of Defense without a method to let it be traced. This year there are requirements for proper accounting. I suggested a personal Presidential representative to watch the spending. I think we should try it and we should give \$800-900 million. With tightening up it should be enough. They were firing like we did. They have reduced that. I think we should try this.

President: Do you recommend a military man?

Stennis: He must have military knowledge.

Aiken: One reason for the cut is they still have a million men under arms.

President: I would assume they have kept the levels up because there has been no reduction in the opposition.

Kissinger: On the contrary, North Vietnamese forces have tripled since the Agreement. North Vietnam has built a whole system of roads so that equipment can come in in a day or so. They [the ARVN] were doing OK until these cuts.

We maybe shouldn't have trained them in our tactics, but we have and it is now their own and it would be disastrous to change.

McClellan: How much more do you need?

Kissinger: \$200 million in military and \$150 in economic.

Mahon: We can provide Kissinger with this money right now. We have to try to hold the line now and try in the new session for more.



McClellan: So how much more are you going to ask for?

Hays: I have never seen the Vietnam aid debate more acrimonious. This is an election year. Fertilizer is a sore point here -- you can't get it here. To talk two months before elections about more aid and more fertilizer is dreaming. Try to hold the line and come back after the elections. I think these are the facts.

President: I understand, but we are trying to lay things out frankly.

Hays: We could have done it earlier, but to reopen it now is really impossible.

Cederberg: I think we will not get a bill before the elections and will be working on a CR. The problem is the CR is low and doesn't include the Middle East.

Kissinger: That's right. The bill has been cut so badly that in many ways we would be better off with a CR, except it would cripple us in the Middle East.

Hebert: We defeated attempts in the House to cut to \$900 million. The Senate was lower but we gave \$1 billion. It was Appropriations which did the \$700 million. We will give you a supplemental; it is on the floor that the trouble will come.

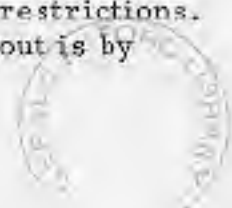
President: The Middle East is tough right now. We are negotiating with Rabin now. They are asking for substantial funds. Look at it in global terms: How can we be having a disaster in Southeast Asia while we are trying to negotiate in the Middle East?

Hays: I filibustered a cut-off of aid to Turkey. You can get Israeli aid, but Greece and Turkey is another problem. I am afraid the Committee may put the Turk prohibition in. You better work on that one.

President: A cut-off to Greece and Turkey would have dire consequences. Negotiations are moving in the direction which we think will be satisfactory.

Sparkman: My committee reported out a bill which had inadequacies. To be frank, though, I think we will have a fight on the floor trying to sustain what is in it.

Kissinger: In addition to the funds, we are concerned about the restrictions. In Greece and Turkey, the only way the situation can be worked out is by



American influence on the Turks. We have been husbanding that to use in the negotiations to get what is necessary. If we cut beforehand, we get nothing for it, and the Greeks get nothing for it. Turkey can't move except in the context of negotiations.

Hays: You should tell this to the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mahon: It is evident to me that there won't be a foreign aid appropriation bill by recess. We will need a new CR. If we could get a standard CR without gimmicks -- without Mideast funds -- we could avoid the restrictions for awhile.

Cederburg: But I think the CR would be amended to include the restrictions.

Speaker: A CR is modified by any authorization bill passed.

Kissinger: Our problems are not Israel, but Egypt and Syria.

Hays: But you have to tie them together to get anything for Egypt and Syria.

President: There are some very delicate problems which rely on use of contingency funds. It's almost gone. We will account for it after, but can't do it now.

Sparkman: I think we should take no action on Greek-Turkish aid until Kissinger finishes negotiations.

President: I agree. The situation in Greece is touchy. The government could go sharply right or left.

Kissinger: I say this privately -- Karamanlis has a tough problem. He has to maneuver to isolate the Papandreou group and to make anti-American statements to preempt the left.

Mahon: It is the consensus that we have a CR until November.

Speaker: I am not sure you should have a bill before January or February. How about the Senate?

Byrd: We had intended to take a bill up next week but could probably defer it until after recess. But we should make a CR until February.



Kissinger: We will pay a price in the Mideast, but maybe the President could use PL 480 to tide us over. I think the CR route is better. We will see what we can piece together.

Albert: If we pass a CR until February and then pass an authorization, does that change the CR?

Cederberg: But the CR could be subject to amendment.

Hays: Get a rule.....

President: Meanwhile, Henry and I will meet with the Foreign Affairs and Foreign Relations Groups next week. We will lay on the talk.

Albert: This will be one of our toughest jobs. There is a philosophical antipathy to aid.

Cederberg: Has anyone talked to the Greek leaders?

Kissinger: Yes. They aren't as well organized as the Israelis. The ones we talked to have left supportive and they understand our strategy is the only one. Only our influence on the Turks is the only way to help the Greeks.

Cederberg: The leader of AHEPA just sent me a letter asking for the Turkey aid cut-off.

Byrd: I think Kissinger should come up to talk to the Republican and Democratic caucuses.

Scott: Can you make it next Tuesday?

Kissinger: I will try.



MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~/NODIS - XGDS

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4.

MR 91-16, #8 NSC #1 8/20/92

By KBF NARA Date 9/25/92

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Ambassador Graham Martin, Ambassador to
Republic of Vietnam
President Ford
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
and Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security
Affairs

DATE AND TIME:

Friday, September 13, 1974
11:30 a.m.

PLACE:

The Oval Office
The White House

President: We had a good meeting yesterday. We sold that group, but it's hard to say how the numbers will come out.

Martin: The propaganda campaign is a real problem.

President: I agree.

Martin: The bureaucracy has the feeling we shouldn't dirty our hands in Vietnam. I have tried to take it on. I met with the Post editorial board, I discussed the issues, not the distortions -- how we came out in Vietnam.

Kissinger: It is inconceivable we can spend \$1 billion in Israel and not the same in Vietnam where so many Americans have died.

Martin: It is remarkable what has happened in the last year, in the degree of acceptance of President Thieu. If we can get all \$700 million without any administrative restrictions, we can hold through the winter. We will need at least \$300 million before the end of the year.

~~SECRET~~/NODIS

~~TOP SECRET~~ - XGDS (3)
CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

Kissinger: The President made that point and Stennis seemed to support it.

President: Yes, he asked for a sort of interdepartmental group to manage the MAP. We sort of have an obligation to do it.

Martin: I have a suggestion -- what about General Adderholt?

Kissinger: Stennis had in mind a Presidential emissary to go out and inspect.

President: Yes, if we send someone we will get Stennis behind us.

Martin: There is no way we can lose Vietnam except throw it away here.

Kissinger: Tell the President about the accounting system.

Martin: They have taken the "sense" of the Congress as in the new bill. If the Pentagon could be instructed to charge only what is legally required, we would be much better off.

Kissinger: I agree with Graham. Vietnam is enormously important in the international perception of the United States.

Martin: If I thought it was hopeless, I would tell you. We can make it. But if North Vietnam sees the loosening of support it will change their perceptions. There will be no peace for a long time, but someday they can accommodate to each other.

President: The trouble is that your story doesn't get broad enough exposure, and the opposition is at it every day.

Martin: Doug Pike has done a study on the "anatomy of deception." You should use him. We aren't giving our friends ammunition to defend against Abzug and the others.

President: Please tell President Thieu of my admiration.

Martin: Can I tell Thieu you will fight for what is needed?

President: You surely can. That was my pitch yesterday and I was amazed at the reaction.

Martin: The Goldwater vote was instructive. The Senate did recognize an obligation.

President: The change in the Post's policy shows what can be done. [See Post editorial attached].

Martin: The Globe and Post Dispatch are moving.

I need \$1 billion and \$600 million. Then we can get more out of the Japanese and the international financial institutions. They are on the verge of a take-off.

On the Continuing Resolution of last year, we would be at \$435 million. In the House it can be done with a closed rule.

President: That would be hard now. We should consult with Mahon to get the right kind of long range.... And a new Continuing Resolution. The leadership was talking about continuing it to February 15 or November 30. I would rather have February.

Martin: We need to get above last year's levels.

President: If we could get them at least to the \$450 million level.

Kissinger: If we could get it at that without the quarterly restrictions.

Martin: Hays said he would help.

President: He can't control Rosenthal and Gross.

It would help if you talked to Mahon and McClellan.

[The conversation ended]

EDITORIALS

WASHINGTON POST 11 August 1974 (12)

Aid for Vietnam

CONGRESS, in its deliberations on aid for South Vietnam, is shying away from the central issue: What is the American interest? For if it matters to the United States whether Saigon fires well or ill, one aid strategy is dictated; and if not, another. To proceed as though the level and kind of aid has no real connection to the goal of American policy is to fly blind.

Like many Americans, we had hoped that the Paris Agreement of 1973 would launch the contending Vietnamese on the path to eventual reconciliation. This would have resolved the American dilemma. But it has not happened. Hanoi and Saigon are still fighting; it looks as though they will for a long time. If one side or the other were clearly at fault, that would be one thing. We accept, however, the judgment of a new Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff study: "Lack of respect for the Agreement is so widespread that it is impossible to apportion responsibility for the continued fighting."

This bears directly on congressional efforts to cut aid. It would be grievously unfair in our view for the United States—by withholding aid—to penalize Saigon alone for a breakdown which is properly the responsibility of both Vietnamese sides. Nor does withholding aid become any fairer in these circumstances when it is described as a way to induce President Thieu to honor the Paris Agreement and to make concessions to his Vietnamese rivals. We have leaned toward this view ourselves in the past. But looking at the record of the last 20 months, we have had second thoughts. We now conclude that it is wrong to try to make Saigon alone observe the agreement, to its political detriment, when Hanoi is under no similar pressure to observe its side of the agreement. Unilateral pressure, furthermore, precludes a new American approach to Moscow and Peking—an approach we believe should be made—to reduce further all outsiders' roles, especially as arms suppliers.

The only correct basis for phasing out aid, we now believe, is a determination that it no longer is important to the United States what happens in South Vietnam. A powerful case for this can be made: the United States has invested an immense amount of blood, treasure and prestige in Vietnam, won that country the opportunity to fend for itself, and now has its own good reason to turn aside. But if this determination is to be made, we Americans owe to ourselves—and to the Vietnamese and to others elsewhere who rely upon us—to make it openly. To pledge fidelity but to reduce our support progressively

or even precipitately is to undermine both interest and honor. If the Congress in its fatigue or wisdom—whatever the mix—is to pare aid this year and to threaten to cut even more next year, it should have the courage to announce that it no longer considers the outcome in Vietnam as a matter of American consequence. To cut aid while claiming that the cut will actually improve Saigon's chances of securing its own salvation is double talk. To cut aid while declaring that the people of South Vietnam will benefit from the new policies thereby forced upon President Thieu is at best, speculation; in our view, it is too flimsy a foundation for policy.

The alternative approach is, of course, to acknowledge a continuing interest in the fate of Saigon and to act accordingly on aid. This is the course we have come to favor, after having inclined the other way during the past 20 months. What has persuaded us to change our view is largely the price new fact that a mutually acceptable political solution has seemed progressively to recede from reach. We think that Americans would not like to live in a world where a small nation that had strong reason to rely on American steadfastness had been let down. In that sense, the American "commitment" to Saigon is open-ended. To hold otherwise is to advertise one's own unreliability. It can be argued, with all too much merit, that the assurance of American support lets Saigon ignore American efforts to induce changes in its domestic policies and in its attitude towards Hanoi. The answer—surely worth testing—is that Saigon may become more responsive to American advice as it becomes less fearful of American abandonment.

Aid to Vietnam should be offered on the basis of what dollar levels and what forms of aid (economic or military) and what particular programs will enable Saigon to tend effectively to its citizens' security and welfare. This formulation admittedly leaves many loose ends, many unresolved arguments, many uncertainties. There is in the United States an evident shortage of economic and political resources to assure success. And whether the Thieu government can adequately respond is a question bound to trouble any realistic observer. We are convinced, nonetheless, that the principle of American steadfastness deserves to be honored as best we can, even though the particular government benefiting from its application in this instance is far from a model regime. There is where the overriding American interest lies.



Wash Post

9-9-74

Aid for Vietnam (Cont.)

MR. EARL RAVENAL'S article elsewhere on this page meets square the issue which, as we have argued in several recent editorials, the Congress should be meeting—but isn't doing its consideration of aid for Vietnam. Does it matter to the United States what happens to South Vietnam? That Americans are sick of Vietnam is not the issue; unless one holds that only enterprises promising success deserve support. Nor should it be controlling that President Thieu's regime is undemocratic and corrupt; a great power concerned with the world balance of power cannot avoid getting stuck with some questionable clients. Nor is it central, though it is distressing, that Moscow and Peking seem to get more mileage out of their military aid to Hanoi than Washington does out of its greater aid to Saigon. These matters affect the political atmosphere in which aid is debated, but the real issue remains the American interest in the outcome.

It is Mr. Ravenal's view that since the United States can't and won't give Saigon enough aid to enable it to win militarily—and the struggle is a military one—then rather than sponsor an indefinite stalemate we should cut military aid to zero and accept whatever outcome results. We do not have either the power to ensure success in Vietnam or to make good on most of our other commitments, he goes on. "The sooner our allies and clients become properly skeptical of our promises of support, the better for us, and possibly for them and for the international system."

Mr. Ravenal is not afraid to pursue his logic to its end. Is one commitment wobbly? Away with them all. The conclusion he salutes so cheerfully, however, is one that shakes us to the roots. His idea of a world "system" is one we would equate with anarchy and an open invitation to violence. For what the Vietnam stalemate is finally about, after all, is the kind of world that Americans want to live in. Is it a world where our friends and values generally fare well, or one where we pull up the ladder, wave to our allies and clients, and tell them that whatever happens, it's for their own good? As proper-

post-Vietnam humility is one thing, the denial of any possibility for constructive American involvement is another. Yes, we did get into Vietnam carelessly, and we have paid for it. To pass through the final stage of our exit no less carelessly, however, is to add further risk to damage already done.

The claim that there is a connection between how the United States discharges one "commitment" and how its allies and adversaries regard its other commitments is indeed prone to abuse. The claim can be used to justify excessive support of obsolete, unwise or exorbitantly expensive commitments. But this is, as we have been saying, a question on which reasonable men can differ. The trap on the other side is the contention that the end game in Vietnam has no connection with the American position elsewhere. And this is wrong.

We are not arguing for indefinite and very high levels of aid. We are arguing for an approach to aid that recognizes precisely this broader connection. In such an approach, aid would be offered at levels which allowed Saigon a fair prospect of holding its own. It would be offered with the expectation of being continued for some time, not yanked back next year or the year after. This is what Congress has failed to do.

If Congress, in cutting aid substantially now, and in threatening to cut more soon, were willing to accept whatever outcome ensues, that would be one thing. We suspect, however, that Congress is repeating the mistake which it and the Executive Branch together made in Vietnam during the 1960s. Making an investment too slight to bring about the desired result, in the 60s the United States sought military victory but did not believe it. Now Congress says it wants a political settlement, but it is pursuing an aid strategy more likely to produce Saigon's military defeat. The better course, we believe, is to accept the costs and uncertainties of a further commitment, even while trying to minimize them, and to provide aid in a way calculated to serve the American interest in a stable and interdependent world.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 11, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: JERRY JONES

FROM: JOHN GUTHRIE *JG*

SUBJECT: Notes on Cabinet Meeting,
October 11, 1974

The President opened the meeting at 10:38 a.m. thanking the attendees for coming. The President made the following points: the upcoming speech in Kansas City will stress the importance of volunteerism; there is generally strong support for his economic address; a better explanation of the surtax proposal needs to be made. Secretary Simon explained that of the 82.5 million tax returns filed annually, about 28% will be affected by the proposal. He further explained that opposition was coming primarily from Republicans and not Democrats. Dean Surch noted that there was substantial support shown in Philadelphia following the President's address there.

Roy Ash reported on Personnel Reduction. He said that there have been a remarkably small number of appeals on the target figures given each department for personnel reductions. The President stated that as soon as the transition problem is solved we are going to cut down the White House staff.

Roy Ash then reported that the Council on Wage and Price Stabilization will work on the elimination of rules and regulations causing inflation. He further stated that the inflation impact statements will be first carried out under executive order then be followed by an OMB circular prescribing the method of testing future rules and regulations against inflation impact.

Secretary Schlesinger commented that he feels productivity could be increased while at the same time reducing the overall number of jobs if we can solve the problem of culling out incompetence which drags down the whole attitude of the bureaucracy. A general discussion followed on this subject. Roy Ash then stated that he will meet with Bob Hampton of the CSC and report back to the Cabinet with an analysis of what can be done.

Under Secretary Shubert stated that we need to develop a more effective way of identifying and encouraging better management techniques. Roy Ash agreed with this point and stated that it is particularly important at the lower level schedule C positions where the dealings are directly with the bureaucracy.

Dean Burch reported on the status of the political campaigns pointing out that the President has a very active schedule and is going into those areas where his appearance can make a difference. He stated that he may be calling on members of the Cabinet with very short notice asking for their support as we get into the campaign. He noted that Secretaries Butz, Morton and Dent had been particularly active and he hoped that the rest will follow those examples. A discussion followed on specific candidates and states.

The President asked the Attorney General to report on the situation in Boston. The Attorney General stated that he feels the whole thing would blow over if we could get two days of relative peace - even if caused by bad weather. He further noted that there is no justification for federal involvement in Massachusetts because the Governor has not yet used all of the means at his disposal.

The President remarked that he wants everyone to get their proposals for his State of the Union message and other legislation in early so that complete coordination could be made before submission.

Secretary Dent said that the Census Bureau shows that less than 50% of the voters will vote in House elections and that he would report back to the President on further developments.

Secretary Brinegar stated that the Transportation Bill has been put over to the next Congress, apparently due to an internal disagreement between the House and Senate Banking Committees and the Rules Committees. The President noted that he feels that it is a good bill and typical of how we have worked with the Congress to develop a bill but in this case how they dropped the ball.

Attorney General Saxbe reported that the Fair Trade Laws in several states tend to eliminate competition. He also said that the proposed Freedom of Information Act has several real problems. Under Secretary Shubert agreed with this and discussed some of the limitations.

Under Secretary Mitchell stated that the Housing Bill proposal is probably going to be acceptable but an evaluation at this time is difficult due to differences in definition of terms. The President said that the failure to pass the Housing Bill is another campaign issue our candidates should be using.

At 11:34 a.m. the President concluded the meeting.



Department of State

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NODIS/CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, CR
SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN SETTLEMENT

REFERENCES: (A) STATE 269721 (?) PARIS 2857

1. MOST DISAPPOINTING ASPECT TO ME OF REPTEL (A) IS THAT WE ARE APPARENTLY DETERMINED TO POSTPONE FURTHER EFFORTS TO FIND A SOLUTION UNTIL AFTER DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN HAS ENDED AND CONGRESS HAS ACTED ON SUPPLEMENTAL.

2. IN THE FIRST PLACE, SITUATION IN CAMBODIA MAY NOT HOLD TOGETHER THAT LONG. EVEN IF IT DOES, AND WE SURVIVE DRY SEASON, AND CONGRESS ACTS FAVORABLY, WE WILL BE IN NO STRONGER POSITION TO OBTAIN AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT THAN WE ARE TODAY, AND VERY LIKELY WE WILL BE IN A MUCH WEAKER POSITION. TO BE BLUNT, WE ARE WASTING TIME. IN MY MAJOR ASSESSMENT LAST JUNE I MADE CLEAR THAT TIME WAS WORKING AGAINST US. IN SEPTEMBER I THOUGHT I HAD CONVINCED EVERYONE CONCERNED THAT WE WOULD NEVER AGAIN BE IN A STRONGER POSITION THAN WE WERE THEN, AND IT WOULD ALL BE DOWNHILL THEREAFTER. NOW IT IS FEBRUARY AND THESE PREDICTIONS HAVE BEEN BORNE OUT BY EVENTS.

3. SIHANOUK HAS MADE HIS POSITION CLEAR, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, THAT HE BELIEVES THE SOLUTION TO THE CAMBODIAN PROBLEM LIES IN WASHINGTON. HE HAS SAID HE WANTS TO TALK TO THE AMERICANS. HE DOES NOT WANT TO

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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 02287 061235Z

TALK TO LON NOL OR TO INTERMEDIARIES. REFTEL (B) REPORTING BUFFUM'S TALK WITH HIBOW REITERATES THAT SIHANOUK WANTS TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE US ON WORKING OUT A PEACE SETTLEMENT, AND THAT HIS ONLY CONDITION REMAINS THE REMOVAL OF LON NOL (WHICH, I BELIEVE, WE ALL AGREE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM). WE HAVE LEARNED FROM A CLANDESTINE SOURCE IN PHNOM PENH THAT SIHANOUK STATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE (ALTHOUGH NOT WITH LON NOL) IN THE COURSE OF AN INTERVIEW WITH A POLISH JOURNALIST IN PEKING ON JANUARY 7. REPORTS OF THIS KIND REACH US VIA MANY CHANNELS, SO THERE MUST BE STRONG FOUNDATION TO THE IDEA THAT SIHANOUK BELIEVES HIS OWN POSITION IS DETERIORATING AND WANTS TO SALVAGE SOMETHING BEFORE THE COMMUNISTS WIN A TOTAL VICTORY. THAT GIVES SIHANOUK AND THE USG A VERY SOUND BASIS FOR WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND A COMPROMISE CONTROLLED SOLUTION AT LEAST PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY TO BOTH.

4. REFTEL (A) INDICATES THAT SIHANOUK MAY NOT BE ABLE TO OBTAIN THE CONCURRENCE OF HIS KHMER ROUGE COLLEAGUES IN THE GRUNK/FUNK. IF THIS IS THE CASE THEN WE MAY BE ABLE TO WEAN SIHANOUK AWAY FROM THE KHMER ROUGE BY OFFERING A COMPROMISE THAT LEAVES OUT LON NOL AND HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES BUT THAT FORGES A NEW AND STRONGER NATIONAL GROUPING OF SIHANOUKIST AND REPUBLICAN ELEMENTS IN SOME SORT OF COALITION. IN ANY CASE, IF WE COULD WEAN SIHANOUK AWAY FROM THE KHMER ROUGE IT WOULD BE A BRAND NEW BALL GAME IN CAMBODIA.

5. I WISH TO URGE IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE US TO UNDERTAKE IMMEDIATE DIRECT CONTACT WITH SIHANOUK TO SEE IF THAT AVENUE WILL OPEN THE WAY FOR THE EARLY COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT WE ARE SEEKING FOR CAMBODIA. IF IT FAILS, WE WILL HAVE LOST NOTHING. BUT IF WE DECLINE TO MAKE THE EFFORT NOW WE ARE WASTING PRECIOUS TIME, AND I AM AFRAID THAT WE HAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME LEFT IN CAMBODIA.

6. I THEREFORE URGE THAT WE DO NOT WAIT UNTIL SIHANOUK GOES TO FRANCE ON A PRIVATE VISIT, WHICH MAY BE WEEKS OR MONTHS AWAY, BUT INFORM HIM NOW REPEAT NOW THAT WE,

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Department of State TELEGRAM

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PAGE 03 PHNOM 02287 061235Z

THE AMERICANS, ARE WILLING TO ENTER INTO A DIALOGUE WITH HIM IN PEKING OR ANY OTHER PLACE OF HIS CHOOSING.

7. I THINK WE HAVE A MORAL OBLIGATION AS AMERICANS TO HELP WORK OUT A CONTROLLED SOLUTION TO THE CAMBODIAN DRAMA. THIS HAS BEEN THE THRUST OF ALL OF MY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPT OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS. THE DEPT'S MESSAGE (REF A) DOES NOT ADDRESS ITSELF TO THIS CARDINAL POINT.

8. WHEN AN AMBASSADOR IS AT ODDS WITH THE POLICY PURSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT, IT IS CUSTOMARY UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR HIM TO SUBMIT HIS RESIGNATION. THESE ARE NOT NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND SUCH AN ACT MIGHT BE MISINTERPRETED AS A DESIRE ON MY PART TO GET OUT. AS A DISCIPLINED FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER I WILL THEREFORE DESIST FROM SUCH ACTION AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER I DO WANT TO REGISTER MY PROFOUND DISAGREEMENT WITH WHAT APPEARS TO ME TO BE DEPT'S REASONING, I.E. THAT WE WILL BE IN A BETTER POSITION FOR NEGOTIATIONS SOME MONTHS FROM NOW OR THAT DEVELOPMENTS WILL HAVE OCCURRED IN THE US OR IN CAMBODIA WHICH WILL SHED A KINDER LIGHT ON OUR FIVE YEAR EFFORT IN CAMBODIA.



9. REQUEST EARLY REPLY TO MY SUGGESTION IN PARA 6 AS WELL AS CLEAR GUIDANCE ON WHAT ACTION DEPT IS CONTEMPLATING TO BRING ABOUT AN EARLY CONTROLLED SOLUTION TO CAMBODIAN CONFLICT. I WOULD LIKE TO HELP IN ANY WAY I CAN TO CARRY OUT THE DEPT'S POLICY BUT IN ORDER TO DO SO, I NEED TO KNOW WHAT THAT POLICY IS. DEAN

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

MR 91-16, #9 NSC Htr 8/20/92
By KBN NARA Date 9/25/92

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Gerald Ford
Congressional Vietnam Delegation:
Senator Dewey Bartlett (R-Okla.)
Representative John Flynt, Jr. (D-Ga.)
Representative Paul McCloskey, Jr. (R-CA)
Representative Millicent Fenwick (R-NJ)
Representative Bella Abzug (D-NY)
Representative Donald Fraser (D-Minn)
Representative William Chappell (D-Fla.)
Representative John Murtha (D-PA)

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and
Assistant to the President for National Security
Affairs
Mr. John O. Marsh, Counsellor to the President
Mr. Max Friedersdorf, Assistant to the President
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to
the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, March 5, 1975
11:15 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office,
The White House

President: Did you find President Thieu amenable to any of your suggestions?

Flynt: My conversation on this was all on the last day. It was agreed that his political base had to be broadened to bring more of the operation into the Government.

Bartlett: Chappell and I also talked to Thieu before we left. We had been asked to by the anti-Thieu loyal Vietnamese -- General Minh, the Labor leader. We suggested that Thieu broaden his base to add advisors who are loyal but are not Thieu supporters. He said he got the information.

McCloskey: This was my fourth trip there. I was surprised by what I saw. Vietnamization has succeeded from a military standpoint. It is a superb fighting force. But these things are disturbing: The South has two fires

TOP SECRET - XGDS (3)
CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

the manpower, they are firing 7 - 1 the artillery, the killed-in-action is double for the North. Yet the North has a tremendous will to fight and the terrain favors them. As you know, we supported giving military aid by 6 - 2. We were even shocked by Cambodia. If it collapses, there will be a massacre. We don't know whether the perimeter can hold. But DOD is asking for some ammunition that Vietnam is using. I don't know whether we can get the votes. I would suggest you withdraw the \$300 [million] because I don't think you can get it and I think it would hurt. But in the long term -- three years -- I think they will lose to the North. They are firing in a 7-1 ratio. I think we could get through the Congress the same kind of aid as the North gets, but that is not enough. So I think you should force negotiations now and not in three years.

Don Fraser: I fear that what we are negotiating is how to transfer power peacefully to the Communists. I am willing to support aid that is enough to allow that to happen. If our goals are higher, we are misled.

On Vietnam, I think there is underreporting on the political changes. I have a report that the Viet Cong infrastructure is coming back to life in the Delta. Even the Government of Vietnam reports a 10% shift in the population. The criticism of Thieu is rising. As the economic situation is bad, complaints grow and Thieu's tie to the corruption is hurting. I would support more aid to Vietnam if I thought the regime was more willing to liberalize in Western values. I don't like to tell others how to behave, but I am reluctant to support those who act in opposition to our political values. I fear that Thieu is moving in the wrong direction. I think Martin is a disaster. He is a total spokesman for Thieu.

Bartlett: I wrote that State must become more realistic on the situation in South Vietnam. We read reports from Embassy people that the Ambassador wouldn't receive reports he didn't agree with. Pete seconds this.

Chappell: I am more optimistic. I saw the same things and perhaps come to a different conclusion. I spoke to _____ who is opposed to Thieu but is a strong anti-communist. His fear was that Thieu is not keeping the doors to dissidents open enough. He wanted to work more with Thieu. We reported that ... to Thieu and he agreed he would do his best.

President: Is organized labor a big factor?

Chappell: It would be an important factor in any election.

Bartlett: I would say a factor, but not a big one.

Chappell: I think Thieu is determined to improve. We looked in detail at the military situation. We found competent generals and high morale. In general, I think South Vietnam has an unusually strong will to defend against Communism and I am willing to support their efforts to do it. I had thought of Vietnam as a leech. I have changed completely. They are a strong country, a strong people and in a few years they could be self-sufficient. They are already in rice, and there are promising oil explorations.

President: Are there any refineries?

Chappell: Not yet, but they could be put in easily. For example, they have taken the refugees, put them through training programs, put them into the countryside, fishing, etc., where they could be productive. I think we would be making a serious mistake not to give them the aid they need. Thieu is not asking for an open-ended situation. He wants to help them in this transition situation.

I was before a reluctant supporter, but now I am a strong one. I think we should do whatever we can to strengthen the fight against communism in that area. Cambodia is desperate. But what we can hope for is a negotiation. But we must get enough food and ammunition in there to keep them going. We found a lot of esprit in the troops. Desertions are down. If we would act now to get help in... The Communists are making an all-out effort now. If they fail, and they hold, I believe Cambodia has a chance.

We had the votes yesterday, 8 - 5 or 7 - 6 is the worst. But it was decided we would be better to go the regular way to get this thing authorized.

Fraser: Our briefings indicated that South Vietnam could lose 2 - 3 more provinces this spring and Hue would be isolated. If that happened it would look like Vietnam was falling apart.

President: So what is your suggestion?

Fraser: I only mention this because it could result in a pull-out syndrome.

McCloskey: Seven reserve divisions could at least isolate the northern provinces.

Kissinger: Could I say a word? The tragedy we face is that the disunity in this country means that had we followed either the Administration's or the opposition's strategy we might be better off. But as it is, we have done first but not enough.

We never tried for a military solution in Cambodia. We did at first enough to keep them alive. In the 1930's, 98% of the people praised Chamberlain -- two years later he was a pariah. I don't know how the people will treat those who led them to disasters, even if it was done in response to popular feelings.

The obstacle to Sihanouk coming back is the Communists, not us. If we get to the rainy season we will have to make the best deal possible.

Can the United States have on its conscience pulling the plug on Vietnam? That is the question. It is easy to say get a political not a military solution. But from my experience with the North Vietnamese, you can negotiate with them only if there is a convergence of forces. When I was visiting a museum in Hanoi with Le Duc Tho, every exhibit of an archaeological excavation in the museum reminded him of a prison he had been in. He had spent most of his life in French prisons. Unless they have run out of military options, they won't negotiate.

I agree with what Don said. In five years we may see Vietnam in the position Cambodia is in now. We go on just not giving enough. The North can concentrate in one place and Thieu must defend a 700-mile border. There is a lot of moralizing -- "Thieu gets more repressive." We press him and he comes up not from conviction but to get aid -- and that is taken in Vietnam as a sign of weakness.

I would urge that we do what is right -- give enough to give it some chance to succeed rather than doom them to a lingering death. The domino theory is discredited. But if we let these people down, the impact on the United States in the world would be very serious indeed.

President: Henry has to leave now for the Middle East. I will go out and then come back and finish. You know my conviction from my House days. It has always been that we should help those who want to help themselves. I have learned more, but my conviction now is deeper. It is interesting to note that when Case (you know his feeling) saw the negotiating record he wanted it made public and he urged aid for Cambodia. We have a fighting chance. If we don't move, we don't have a chance. It will be a blot on the conscience of the United States. I spoke to Church and Passman about my statement. We agreed to negotiate a figure. That figure has to be adequate. We must do it well or concede that our policies will have an adverse effect in Southeast Asia and actually have a divisive effect. We need to find a way to do what is right.

[The Secretary leaves]

Abzug: My trip was important to me although you know my opposition. The tragedy of Cambodia was striking. We have an obligation, but I see it as a humanitarian one. I think military aid only brings more suffering. I, too, worry about what the takeover will bring, and I think one purpose of the negotiation must be to prevent retribution. I think the American people would accept a massive humanitarian effort, but not to continue the military slaughter. There is no way out -- it is lost and we want to minimize a bloodbath, and military aid maximizes that. We have a moral obligation and to protect them in the event of a changeover. Anything else will be misunderstood and make things worse.

President: If we could divide it, that would be fine. But we can't make that clean a break.

Abzug: You can if we make a realistic appraisal.

President: I don't know if you have yet seen our negotiating efforts. They have been pursued and will be.

Abzug: I agree with Don that the basis of negotiation may not be there. Giving military aid is a gesture and doesn't solve the situation. On Vietnam, the difficulty I have with the three-year idea is that it will stiffen the resistance of the South. Unless we broaden the government and maybe remove Thieu, there is no hope. If we increase aid, the other side will. Why don't we look at a different diplomatic approach? We have not as of now been prepared to offer a realistic negotiation. I see the possibility to convince the American people only if we change our objectives. We still behave as if it were our war and we have to bring about a victory.

Murtha: I want to reinforce what Secretary Kissinger said. I think it is imperative we have a victory in the United States. The rest of the world is watching us. Southeast Asia is rich in resources and people. If North Vietnam wins they will have a strong army dedicated to communism.

The army has been cut back to the bone because of shortages. The United States' forces there used 6,000 rounds a day, the ARVN is using 800, to defend the same territory. They are now making efforts to conserve ammunition, so their casualties have increased, and they are losing land which will have to be taken back at great expense. If we don't give them aid we will end up with a historic blot on the record of the United States. I think the American people know that. We have an obligation to fulfill our words. There is no doubt about the improvement in the security situation since I was there before.

Fenwick: I have been against our military activities for many years. This trip has been hard because I am shaken in my conviction. In Cambodia, we are in on the third act. The key is China. As long as China sends bullets, there is no end. It doesn't matter who is sitting in Phnom Penh. Can't we redouble our efforts to see what China wants for the area?

I will vote for military aid only if it is part of some program to settle the situation. We have to have a way to get the small people out -- the non-coms, the teachers, lawyers, refugees, civil servants. If we could organize with Thieu and South Vietnam to take these people, I would vote for military aid. I feel the United States best serves its own prestige by that kind of action.

In Vietnam, no dissident I talked to wanted to see the communists win in Vietnam. It doesn't matter how opposed they were to Thieu. That being the case, what do we do? I don't know. I am in an agony of spirit. We don't benefit the people by allowing a takeover that no one wants. Thieu's press law and the law restricting parties must be reproved. Finally, I think Thieu should ask international observers in to monitor the elections. Martin says Thieu would win. If so, why wouldn't he let it? Now the corruption -- the elements of some kind of viable system are there, but there is no mass support for the parties. Only the Catholics, the Buddhists and the Cao Dai have mass support. The reality is there is no substitute for Thieu. We can't continue to vote money where we don't see the hope for a viable solution.

In Cambodia we must get to the UN, the refugee committee and plan to get the people out. I don't know what to recommend in Vietnam. I don't agree with Don to phase out because I don't know where it will lead us.

President: Let me reiterate. I am grateful that you went, including those of you who came back with negative views. I am impressed with your sincerity. We will take account of your suggestions. I wish we could sort things out as easily as some people think. I think the United States must make a maximum effort -- being forthright and strong and in Cambodia arriving at a negotiation. In Vietnam, I am willing to go along with a three-year cutoff. I think that gives them better than a 50-50 chance of making it. I think our country must be strong and forthright and forthcoming in negotiation.

Bartlett: We want to support you and help achieve support in the Congress and the public.

Fraser: If you could pull in people who have had a different approach -- like Paul Warnke -- you might get some more support on this side of the aisle.

President: We won't rule out any suggestion.

[The meeting concluded]

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

URGENT INFORMATION

March 12, 1975

HPK made source. /20

MEMORANDUM FOR:

SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM:

WILLIAM L. STEARMAN *Kissinger*

SUBJECT:

Ominous Developments in Vietnam

A number of recent significant military and political developments in Vietnam provide an ominous indication of North Vietnamese strategy and intentions for the months to come. The high level of military activity since March 10 reinforces this view. These new developments are:

-- In December of 1974 the 23rd plenum of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee issued Resolution 23. This may have dealt with a new policy toward the South.

-- In late February and early March, high level Soviet and PRC delegations visited Hanoi. Soviet Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolay Firyubin led the Soviet group. The presence of the PRC delegation and Firyubin in Hanoi may be the result of a major Hanoi policy change relating to the war in South Vietnam.

-- Communications intelligence indicates that as of March 10, North Vietnam is apparently deploying to the South an integral unit, the size and identity of which are unknown. This is in addition to the probable movement of elements of the 341st NVA Division from Quang Binh in North Vietnam across the DMZ into Quang Tri and the confirmed movement of the 968th Division from Laos into the central highlands.

-- The forward element of COSVN has expanded its communications and is now in contact with at least three divisions and a number of independent units in the Tay Ninh -- Parrots Beak Area. This forward element will probably be the senior tactical control unit in the expected coordinated Communist offensive in MR 3. Its existence is more evidence of forthcoming multi-regiment size attacks in that area.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 2.5

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~NSC Memo, 14/27/75, State Dept. Confidential
By *HPK* NARA Date *11/6/00*

-- Infiltration groups are being dispatched during the current dry season at a rate double that for the same period during the 1973-74 dry season. If the current rate continues, this dry season's infiltration will rival the high level of 1968. (1975: 125,900 - 1968: 130,300)

-- A large scale military recruitment program is being carried out in North Vietnam and the training period for these inductees has been reduced from 4 to 6 months to about 1 month. This shortened cycle now enables the NVA to recruit, train and dispatch infiltration groups in the span of little more than a month. Troops which started training in February are already on their way South.

-- The NVA is continuing to ship large amounts of cargo and additional weapons into the NVN Panhandle, including some tanks and 130 mm guns. Destination of these weapons is unknown, but they are probably enroute to South Vietnam.

-- MIGs have been returned to southern North Vietnam. MIG 17's are at Dong Hoi and MIG 21's are believed to be at Vinh. The MIG force will be primarily reactive in nature, although the MIG 17's may be used as ground attack aircraft with MIG 21s providing air cover.

-- Communist troop indoctrination has stressed that fighting in 1975 will be very intensive. Slogans being used to exhort troops on to a high performance are:

- . "Repeat 1968"
- . "Attack as in 1972"
- . "Achieve a victory like Dien Bien Phu"

When taken together, these signs indicate that the North Vietnamese spring offensive could be extremely intense and is probably designed to achieve a fundamental change in the balance of power in the South. Many intelligence sources indicate that this fighting is a prelude to a new round of negotiations designed to achieve an implementation of the Paris Accords on North Vietnamese terms.



The probable NVN strategy will be to make its gains in the spring and early summer and then offer a cease-fire before the GVN is able to recoup many of its losses. Congressional pressure to accept such an offer would no doubt be great -- since it would be seen as a chance to end the fighting and to reduce our military aid. As it is unlikely that the GVN will be ready to accept the NVN proposals, the Communists would probably seek to pressure us, through the Congress, into forcing Thieu to acquiesce. We may, therefore, soon be facing a situation in which heavy pressure will be placed on the Executive Branch to accept Hanoi's proposals. These will probably center around establishing the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord with some quasis-governmental powers and providing the Communists complete access to the GVN-controlled population.



MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET/NODIS/XGDS~~

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
and Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
General Frederick Weyand, Army Chief of
Staff (at end)
Amb. Graham Martin, Ambassador to the
Republic of Vietnam (at end)
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, March 25, 1975
9:22 - 10:25 a.m.

PLACE: Oval Office

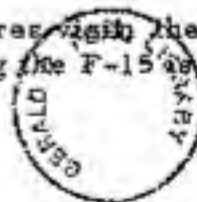
Kissinger: They [the Israelis] are so used to total support that an even-handed account is biased against them. They think I influenced Berger and Gwertzman against them. I didn't. I think they are cranking up an assault -- not on you, but on me. Javits said I was obviously emotionally upset and had quit too soon. He and Case were one step from being nasty.

President: I have no hesitancy. . . .

Kissinger: It is very painful to me, but you should know that if we continue this route they will go after us.

President: I think we should keep a calm, dispassionate position. If they get emotional, it will reflect on them.

Kissinger: If we cancel the F-15 and the Peres visit they will howl. But if it happens now, it will look as if giving the F-15s to enable them to defend their intransigence.



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With PORTIONS EXEMPTED
E.O. 12958 Sec. 1.5 (A)

MR 95-86, #11, NARA 10/1/96

By lit NARA Date 11/1/92

~~SECRET/NODIS/XGDS~~

CLASSIFIED BY HENRY A. KISSINGER
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5 (b) (1, 3)
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON Imp. to det.



We have to show Israel that we are a great power and they don't run our foreign policy. I think we should consult with the Soviet Union. If they go too far we can stonewall, but I see no other way to go. I will give you my ideas in a couple of days, but I maybe should go to Moscow and meet with the British, French, and Germans. We can't give them \$2.5 billion now.

President: No way.

Kissinger: Maybe we should give them what we gave last year, plus an inflation factor.

I'll be testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. I don't know whether it's better open or closed.

In Indochina, I think if we don't move fast we will be in big trouble. The withdrawal has been a disaster. We will need a massive resupply to replace what they lost. Weyand should be told to find out what is necessary.

I think we should give what the GVN says it needs. Defense will say it can't be done.

[General Weyand and Ambassador Martin are brought in.]

President: Fred, you are going with the Ambassador. This is one of the most significant missions you ever had. You are not going over to lose, but to be tough and see what we can do. We have talked options -- they're all on the tough side. We want your recommendation for the things which can be tough and shocking to the North. I regret I don't have authority to do some of the things President Nixon could do.

Kissinger: We need Weyand's judgment of what is needed. I think \$300 million isn't enough. John Oakes of the New York Times has religion -- says we can't kill our ally. We have to know: What is the real situation and why? What can be done?

President: We want to be strong and shocking to the North.

Kissinger: But we have that soft Ambassador. [Laughter]

Graham has been telling me that since May we have shipped nothing but POL and ammunition. No spares.



Martin: I think they can give them a helluva scrap.

Kissinger: If they can extricate their forces.

President: Do you have any question about what you are undertaking?

Weyand: Not in my mind.

Martin: If we are not legalistic, there are things we can do.

Kissinger: Like what?

Martin: Art. 7.

Kissinger: [Describes Art. 7]

Martin: I will have a list by the end of the week. Tran van Lam gave a pessimistic appraisal for the aid. If we can show some determination.

Weyand: We will bring back a general appraisal and give them a shot in the arm.

[Martin and Weyand leave.]

Kissinger: The V-E Day celebration. How about Harriman?

President: O.K. I think we ought to try to balance the delegation. We do have to balance it.

Kissinger: Scranton didn't take the job? This is the fifth time.

President: The real reason is he won't face up to the tough job. He says he wants to help me politically instead.

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

SECRET/NODIS/XGDS

WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3A

NR91-16, REF NSC 141, 8/20/92

By KBH NARA Date 9/23/92

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

President Ford
Truong Quoc Buu, South Vietnamese Labor Leader
and Six South Vietnamese Parliamentarians
Amb. Tran Kim Phuong, RVN Ambassador
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE & TIME:

Tuesday - March 25, 1975
11:00 a.m.

PLACE:

The Cabinet Room

[There was a brief press photo opportunity.]

President: I am very pleased, Mr. Buu, to have the opportunity to greet you and your associates from Vietnam.

Phuong: We are very honored that you have been willing to meet with the Parliamentarian Delegation and Mr. Buu.

I informed President Thieu last night of your kindness in receiving us. He asked me to tell you he appreciated your kindness and your letter. He will write very shortly to explain the situation. He expresses his deep appreciation. He is aware of your efforts with the Congress. Your kindness and understanding he appreciates, and anything you can do with the Congress. We have had to withdraw from the Highlands in the face of the massive illegal attack from the North. Last night we also had to withdraw from Hue. The road south is cut off, so resupply by land and air is impossible. There are three divisions attacking. The President says we will make a stand in Danang.

[He gets out a map.] The President asked me to tell you what we will do now. We will regroup in Danang as an enclave because two provinces to

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EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5(b)(3)
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON Emp To Det.

the south already overrun -- Kontum and Quang Nghai. We will defend the Coastal provinces and the two Highland provinces. We will hold this line [indicating] and MR-3 and MR-4. During the last two weeks there is a feeling that we have drawn back, but this area is indefensible. We could get three or four divisions chewed up or immobilized at Hue. We can resupply Danang by ship, but not Hue. (There is no harbor, because of shifting sands.)

President: Mr. Ambassador, Mr. Buu, members of the Parliament, I am happy to have you. I spent 25 years in Parliament and have a great understanding of your problems. I am disturbed, as are the American people, that they have so flagrantly violated the Paris Accords. Please tell President Thieu I am pleased to have a chance to see his plan for a military defense. It is important that it be successful. Tell President Thieu I will do everything I can to get the aid that South Vietnam needs.

I hope you all have a chance to discuss these with members of Congress -- I think there is a better spirit now. I hope the Congress will respond, and my Administration will do its best.

The news is bad, but if your government carries out this deployment, I wish you well.

I am sending General Weyand to Vietnam tomorrow to make an assessment and report to me. He is a friend of Vietnam and has been directed to tell me what we can do to help.

Buu: I am very happy to be here. Thank you for your words of support. We send you the greetings of labor. We don't agree with President Thieu on everything but we certainly do on fighting the Communists. I have been affiliated with the CIO for 20 years. Always before, we could count on United States. But now, the statements being made are more damaging than the bombs of the North. These announcements have encouraged the Communists to attack. The North Vietnamese are being supported by the Chinese and the Soviet Union. If the United States doesn't help us, who will? Millions of the Vietnamese people's attention is focussed on the United States to see what you will do.

President: The AFL/CIO under George Meany has always supported American action in Vietnam. Some in the labor movement haven't, but

but George Meany and his associates have supported American strength in Vietnam and elsewhere. They know that labor has no voice under a Communist regime and that in a democracy labor does have a means to achieve its goals. George Meany and I don't always agree -- like you and President Thieu -- but we agree that we must support people who want to be free if they are willing to fight. The Government of Vietnam is fighting and standing strong and I will do everything possible to be helpful.

Buu: Whatever you can do, do it quickly.

President: We will expedite the military and economic assistance and try to get Congress to make additional funds available.

Minh: On behalf of the delegation, I want to express my thanks and express the feeling of the Vietnamese people. We thank you for your help and understanding.

We want peace but we must resist aggression. We can't exercise self-determination without help. We have to thank you for your help in our fight for survival and freedom. We have confidence in the United States as the leader of the free world. We have met about 50 Congressmen. Some of them are open with us, some of the freshmen. Before, they were misinformed, but I think now it is better, since we are here and your delegation went there.

President: I appreciate your help on the Hill. We will continue to ask for action.

Diap: It is a great honor to be here. Everybody is desperate; more than 1.5 million of our people are fleeing. I am speaking for the people of North Vietnam and Hue. In 1968 half of my family was killed in Hue, and now the other half are forced to flee.

Phuong: Over half of this delegation is from Hue. Since we will fight at Danang, there is the problem of moving the refugees from Hue and eventually out of Danang so we can fight. We can only move 40,000 a month. [He shows on the map.] We feel strongly about Hue, but we can't sacrifice two divisions at Hue.

President: Danang has a good harbor?

Phuong: Yes.

President: Are these new lines easily defensible?

Phuong: We have to defend along here. We intend to do it firmly.

President: Let me just say again how strongly I support the government and the Vietnamese people. This is an important area the world views as a fight for freedom. We must continue to help, and to the extent I can continue to do so, I will. Keep up the good fight, and give to President Thieu and the others my best wishes for strength and freedom in the years ahead.

[The meeting ended.]

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Friday, March 28, 1975
Time: 3:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.
Place: Cabinet Room, The White House
Subject: Middle East and Southeast Asia

Principals

The President
The Vice President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of the Treasury William Simon
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General George S. Brown
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll (only for
Vietnam portion)
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Joseph S. Paine
Defense: Deputy Secretary William Clements
WH: Donald Rumsfeld
NSC: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft
Robert B. Oakley *RB*

XGDS - 3
DECLAS - Date Impossible to Determine.
BYAUTH - Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

~~TOP SECRET~~/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

DECLASSIFIED - E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
With PORTIONS EXEMPTED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 1.3 (a) (4) & (5)

NR 92-10, #18 NSC Mr. 10/7/94

President:

This is the first of the steps, and a very important step, which we must take following the extremely disappointing results of Henry Kissinger's long and arduous trip to the Middle East. I told Rabin that unless there was a settlement, we would have to reassess our policies toward the Middle East, including Israel. I don't know if they understood what I was saying but I think they do now. Since I have been in office, we have worked with Israel to try and get a settlement. We acted in good faith and I assume they did, also, but when the chips were down they showed a lack of flexibility which was needed for an agreement. What I said to the Hearst papers about more Israeli flexibility being in the best interests of peace is true. But there was no flexibility. I will catch flak for my position and Henry is already catching it. The time has come for a good hard look.

I will tell you briefly about my record in Congress where Israel is concerned. It was so close that I had a black reputation with the Arabs. I have always liked and respected the Israeli people. They are intelligent and dedicated to the causes in which they believe. They are dedicated to their religion, their country, their family and their high moral standards. I admire them and respect them. And I have never been so disappointed as to see people I respect unable to see that we are trying to do something for their interest as well as for our own. But in the final analysis our commitment is to the United States.

Vice President:

Hear, hear.

President:

We could have been together but now I do not know. The reassessment will take place and we will see. We cannot afford to have our position in this country undercut but I must tell you what I think. We will be following a firm policy of reassessment. It will not be decided today. Everyone will take a close look first. But in the meantime, keep everyone at arm's length.

Henry, do you want to tell us about your mission and where we are now?

Kissinger:

Let me describe some of the issues which we will face in the reassessment of a Middle East policy. First, what have we been trying to achieve?

In November 1973 all the Western Europeans, the Japanese and the USSR were solidly united on an immediate Israeli return to the 1967 lines. If the situation had been allowed to continue, given the economic problem in the West, all the pressures would have been on us. And at Geneva everyone would have been united against Israel with the US acting as Israel's lawyer. Our policy helped abort this sort of Geneva Conference, even though we went along with the idea in order to keep the Russians calmed down. We had the willingness of Sadat to play a constructive, cooperative role and the active encouragement of Feisal for the step-by-step approach. This held off the radicals and enabled us to create a situation in which all the Arabs were turning to us, while Israel had a situation which it could handle politically since it had to deal with only a small piece at a time. We also neutralized the Western Europeans and Japanese who are anxious to replace us in the Middle East. Objectively, there is little to distinguish the effect of their policies from those of the Soviets. This process which we instituted proceeded well and met Israel's interests as well as our own. The two were compatible in the step-by-step approach.

So the big issue with Israel during my last trip was not lines on maps. By the way, the leaked maps in the New York Times and elsewhere are inaccurate. They only showed us a map after the negotiations were over. But lines are trivial compared to whether or not the moderate Arab leaders are able to say the US has delivered something. And this is

fully in line with the survival of Israel, really the best way to ensure Israel's survival. The USSR was completely out of the game and on this last trip Feisal came to the point where he told me he trusted me to proceed as I judged best even though he would have preferred another approach. And Asad told me he wanted separate negotiations with Israel rather than Geneva.

So our disappointment is that Israel did not understand. They could have been shielded and their only friend, literally their only friend in the world, was in control of the process, dealing with the Arabs singly and keeping the USSR out. Even Iraq was beginning to move out of the Kurdish orbit. I do not approve of the brutal way in which Iran and Iraq disposed of the fate of the Kurds, but it created a situation whereby the Iraqis no longer had such need for the Soviets. I was hoping that in such a situation with all the Arabs turning to us and away from the USSR, someone in the Kremlin would have gotten discouraged and said, "Let's stop pouring so much money and effort down a rat hole." That was the situation we had one week ago.

On the whole, in the negotiations, I think Egypt went further and Israel not as far as I had expected. But our role and the whole strategy we had followed for eighteen months, putting us in the key position, has been disrupted. Now that the parties are face to face with it, they are not so eager for Geneva.

A unilateral US effort now would be a mistake, would make it look as if we were more anxious than the parties. If they came to us, we could think about doing something but there can not be any more shuttles. The pressure on the Arabs is likely to be against cooperating with us. Sadat will have to move toward the other Arabs in order to protect himself and also a bit toward the Soviets and Western Europeans and Geneva. Moreover, tensions in the area will

build up. UNEF is due for renewal on April 26 and UNDOF a month later. Sadat told me he would renew UNEF for three months, not six. I would expect UNDOF to be renewed for two months. Both would thus expire simultaneously by the end of July and by August we could have a flash point on both fronts.

Schlesinger: Will the Soviets veto a renewal?

Kissinger: Not if the parties are for it. I expect we will have some violations of the agreement soon. The Egyptians already have some SAM sites across the Canal and there will probably be more. Syria and the PLO will get back in the game, perhaps with guerilla raids from Lebanon. The Secretary General is already in the game, trying to arrange Geneva. I am trying to slow him down a little. If Geneva meets, things will happen. Israel will have to deal with all of its neighbors and all of the final issues at the same time. Up to the present, thanks to our strategy, we and Israel were able to avoid this.

President: When would Geneva meet?

Kissinger: Let's not rush into it. We must act as if we were ready to go all-out to head for Geneva but not actually set a date. That will have a good effect on the parties. I think we can wait until June but we can not appear to stall or hang back. Even though the Soviets are now in a good tactical position, we still have the chips because everyone is still counting on us to move Israel. We can get the benefit of this basic situation if we can deliver. This is true bilaterally or at Geneva. If we do not deliver, the Arabs will conclude that only force can get anything from Israel. For the moment Egypt and Saudi Arabia still have some confidence in the US, judging from what was said to the Vice President.

Vice President: And also affection for the US and for Henry.

Kissinger:

There will now be a more active Soviet role and if the Arabs do not think they can get enough progress they will ask that the UK and France participate at Geneva. We have an interest in the survival of Israel but we also have broader interests with the Western Europeans and Japan and the Arabs. If there is another war we run the risk of antagonizing the Arabs definitively and of pushing them into the arms of the Soviets. We will also risk a direct confrontation with the Soviets. At Geneva we will confront the basic issues of final frontiers and Palestine and guarantees and demilitarization. We may have to draw up a comprehensive US plan for the Middle East so as not to be empty-handed.

A big question is to what degree we will want to coordinate with or dissociate ourselves from Israel. What kind of economic and military aid should we provide and what should the timing be? What kind of military supply policy should we have for the Arabs? As I see it, the only remaining Soviet influence in Egypt is the latter's need for spare parts and other military items from the USSR. What about our energy policy and the Joint Committees? What about the PLO?

Even if we decide to do nothing we must have a policy. We need a diplomatic strategy for Geneva and a strategy for bilateral relations, with the Arab states and Israel, economically and militarily. There are also some tactical questions concerning Geneva: Should we go for a stalemate with a subsequent resumption of our bilateral efforts, or go to Geneva with a US plan and force a settlement? We need a carefully worked-out strategy for another war. The last time we came out very well without an advance strategy but the next time we can not improvise. Another war will produce very heavy casualties--I think Bill Colby's estimate is for 7000 Israeli dead--with more Arab countries joining in and a greater risk of Soviet involvement!

The Soviets will be a much bigger threat than in the past. In 1967 and again in 1973 they stood aside while their Arab allies were humiliated. The cumulative resentment is building up and is likely to push them to be less cautious this time in showing their power. This is all the more true since they see the US as weak and unwilling to stand up for its commitments anywhere in the world.

That is why we need a total reassessment. Joe Sisco will be in charge of a special working group to consider all of these questions. It should take about three weeks.

We need to keep the immediate situation under control and then recapture control of the long-term situation. We can do this since the Arabs know they still need to come to us to get progress. But we must be absolutely certain that we can deliver progress the next time.

President: Thank you, Henry, what do the others have to say?

Schlesinger: I think Henry's presentation was very accurate. Our position could be one of dignified aloofness. We are in the cat-bird seat. We can go to Geneva, point out we have already done our best but did not succeed, so we will just sit and wait to see what develops.

Vice President: Do you mean aloofness from Israel?

Schlesinger: Yes, I do. There should not be full policy coordination with Israel as in the past. We should look forward, not to the past. United States policy has been frustrated to the extent we hope to be successful in the years ahead. We can not allow Israel to continue its relationship with us as if there were no problems. We can not let them conclude that they can upset the U.S. applecart but the Administration can do nothing about it. The military balance from the Israeli standpoint is much better than the last time we met (in the NSC) to discuss this problem. We overestimated

badly the amount of Soviet arms which Egypt had received. So the balance for Israel is reasonably favorable and we need not be concerned over our aloofness.

Simon:

What about the Joint Economic Commissions?

President:

This is a crucial question. Joe Sisco is coordinating our reassessment. It is not aimed at tilting toward or against Israel or toward or against Arabs. It is aimed at the best interests of the U.S. Jim (Schlesinger) used a good word, "aloof," and I think this is the posture we should adopt at least during the period of our policy reassessment. As an example of this, it would be better if Peres did not come on his visit as originally planned. And as for the F-15, I think we should hold up the visit by the Israeli team which was coming to make an assessment. Bill (Simon), you should be aloof with the Joint Committee.

Simon:

We have Joint Commissions with several countries, including Iran and Saudi Arabia. How shall we handle this?

President:

The Iranians and Saudis are in a different category. They were not involved in the negotiations.

Simon:

What about Egypt?

President:

What are we doing there?

Simon:

We have several projects, particularly helping them rebuild the area along the Suez Canal.

President:

As I recall, we were slow in getting started with Egypt so we can afford to be more forthcoming than with the Israelis.
..... There is no pique on our part but we are reassessing so we will be restrained.

Colby:

President: As I recall my own experiences as a Congressman, the Israeli representatives float very freely on Capitol Hill. Now we can't do anything about that with Congress. But I have the impression the Israeli representatives are almost as free in many Departments as they are with Congress. You must try to control that.

Schlesinger: We have, Israeli representatives. It is very difficult to handle.

President: Try to do
Channelize the relationships with Israeli representatives. The proper relationship should be business-like but arms-length and aloof. Jim, what did we do about that Israeli shopping list last fall?

Kissinger: The NSC recommended that we give them two out of eight slices but we ended up by giving them four out of eight.

President: I decided to include the Lance and the LGB because I thought they needed it. In retrospect, bearing in mind what I believed we were going to do together and what has actually happened, we were probably too generous. Jim, hold off on delivering those high priority items if there is a way to do it.

Schlesinger: We have a commitment to deliver the Lance.

Vice President: I thought they had a commitment, too, on negotiations.

Clements: We can prolong the Lance training in order to delay delivery.

President: Stay within the guidelines. How you implement it is your business. When we have reassessed, then we can proceed. For the moment, I would like to look at the four slices of arms we gave them and what we have delivered already.

Schlesinger: Haig was here last week complaining about the drawdowns on NATO stocks in Europe. I told him he knew all about it.

President: I would like to see those four slices. Did we go so far as to increase their offensive capability, not only improve their defensive capability? I want to see everything that has been delivered to Israel. I want to be able to show Congress just how much we have done militarily for Israel. Also, I would like to see what we have delivered to the Arabs in the way of military hardware.

General Brown: There is the question of when the stocks we have drawn down for Israel will be replaced for our own forces. You can use this with Congress.

President: That would be useful. Get me a list of what we have done since I have been President. If challenged, I want the record.

Kissinger: It would also be valuable to know what we have delivered since November 1973 when our major re-equipment program began.

President: That will be useful for background but the stress should be on what has happened since I came to office, so show where the cut-off is. We have drawn down our own capability.

Clements: We have even drawn out of our own stocks.

President: I want to look at the facts. Bill (Colby), do you want to talk?

Colby: A major factor is the increased chance of war. We put out a Special National Intelligence Estimate yesterday. The armies of Egypt, Syria and Israel are all in a state of alert and there is a substantial chance of hostilities breaking out either deliberately or by accident at any time in the next few weeks. If it does not happen quickly, then there will be negotiations

at Geneva and if there is no progress there by early summer there are high odds that Egypt and Syria will launch a coordinated attack and even higher odds that Israel will attack first. Israel probably sees war as inevitable and may decide to hit now. Comparatively, they are well off. They can probably beat Egypt and Syria both in 7-10 days.

Kissinger: We told Asad this was our estimate of how the war would develop, not Israel's estimate but our own. Asad told me we did not understand: "We learned in 1973 that Israel can not stand pain. We will lose a lot but we will not give up and we will use the strategy of inflicting casualties and fighting an extended war. We will lose territory and men but bleed Israel and draw the Soviets in. "

Schlesinger: If Israel strikes first, they will not behave rationally. They are likely to strike through Lebanon.

Kissinger: They may be able to hit quickly but the Syrians are determined to hold out.

Colby: We project 7,000 Israeli killed, three times as many as in October 1973. But we believe they can punch through.

Sisco: The Arabs will not stick their necks out. This is a very critical judgment. It can determine the outcome of the war. The Arabs will fight on the defensive and drag it out as long as possible.

Kissinger: The Arabs think of prolonged war and an early oil embargo.

Schlesinger: Before the US resupplies? That would be crazy. We won't stand for it.

Kissinger: We must think of it. Also, our contingency planning needs to assume higher risk-taking by the Soviets.

President: Did the Soviets go further in 1973 than before?

Schlesinger: They threatened the British and French in 1956 with nuclear attack.

Kissinger: Only after we had dissociated ourselves from our allies and told them to pull back.

Schlesinger: The Soviets were all bluster.

Clements: The priority problem is that Israel may decide their position will worsen so they will preempt. They already had before April 1st enough to preempt and as their situation worsens, they could decide to go now. Also, as we became more aloof, this could aggravate the situation. It could push them to this kind of decision.

Kissinger: We must weigh many factors. I agree with Bill that if there is no progress by summer, there will be war within one year or maybe this year. We have six months to produce something. For Israel to go to war at the known displeasure of the U.S. would be a monumental decision. We must keep the Arabs from becoming too upset but show Israel they can not ignore us. The next time we must be in a position to get results from Israel.

Schlesinger: Maybe the word aloof is not a good one. We can say to the Israelis that we have made an honest effort and our well is temporarily dry. Whether it will be temporary or permanent depends on you. We are here.

President: Rocky, what about your talks with Sadat and the Saudis?

Vice President: Mr. President, your thought of sending someone to the funeral of King Feisal and your letters made a deep impression and I believe really helped the Saudis get through a very difficult period. Saudi Arabia wants to follow the policy of cooperation of King Feisal, judging from my talks with Khalid and Fahd. I told

Fahd we want his advice. He said that Feisal had stood up to Nasser on radicalism in the Arab world when it appeared that Saudi Arabia was all alone but by the time of his death Egypt had come around to seeing that Feisal was right. Fahd said, however, that unless there is a "just, equitable and lasting peace within one year"--and those are his exact words--the Soviets will move back in, the radicals will be reinvigorated and rearmed by the Soviets while the moderates will move away from the US and establish a close relationship with Western Europe. The Europeans have arms they want to sell, we have the money to buy and we can learn to fly the planes and drive the tanks. The Arabs will keep building their military strength as long as it takes from the USSR and Western Europe and in time we will crush Israel. That is what Fahd said to me. He is right about the Western Europeans. The French sent their Defense Minister to the funeral with a list of items for sale and models of aircraft and tanks. This offended the Saudis.

Simon:

Israel might strike first. Is Egypt fully resupplied? I gather they are not and Israel is militarily superior. They won't allow the Arabs to fight a war of attrition. Also, if there is too much uncertainty about our support, it could lead Israel to conclude it must hit first.

Kissinger:

Our problem would be the same if Israel hits soon or later on. Even if Israel destroys the Arab armies, we will face the same problems in our relations with the Arabs, Western Europeans and Soviets. We would be obliged to step in, tell Israel that is enough and impose or try to impose a settlement along the 1967 line. There is a physical limit to what three million people can occupy and sooner or later we will have to stop this process.

President:

Exactly. How many miles of territory and how many cities can Israel occupy?

Kissinger: And would the Soviets stand by while that happened?

Colby: We think the Soviets are freer to support the Arabs than they have been before. It would take them only a very few days to fly in defensive support such as SAMs and aircraft. Their airborne troops could probably be beaten by the Israelis because they would only be lightly armed, but they could reinforce the air defense around Cairo and Damascus and other cities.

Kissinger: I am not sure Israel would directly attack Soviet troops.

Brown: When I was reading the Special National Intelligence Estimate, I had the impression of hearing an old record over again. We made a mistake about the Arabs in October 1973. What Sisco had to say is very important. We must keep our minds open.

Schlesinger: Israel will certainly win another round.

Brown: Israel's army is very good. We know that. But don't count out the Arabs.

Vice President: Think what another war would mean for us. The OPEC countries would stick together in an oil embargo, particularly since the Latin Americans are already unhappy with us. This could cause paralysis of the East Coast of the United States.

President: I told Morton to put together a contingency plan on what would be likely to happen if there were another oil embargo, what measures we can take, and what the probable result would be. We need to follow up on this.

Simon:

I don't believe Venezuela will shut off exports to the U.S.

Vice President:

Venezuela is leading the movement of Latin American solidarity in standing up to the U.S. on economic matters. Would you like to take the risk if you were Governor of New Jersey?

Clements:

I agree with Nelson.

Colby:

We would have two or three months of grace due to our stockpiles.

Clements:

There is the geographical dislocation problem. We are just not set up to transfer our production and stocks rapidly enough from one part of the country to another.

President:

I told FEA and others to get some contingency plans ready. I have decided that when Congress comes back on the 9th or 10th, I am going to speak to a Joint Session on foreign policy. I am going to lay it on the line, Far East, Middle East, National Security and Defense, and other topics. The President has to speak out strongly and positively. Send your suggestions to Brent for incorporation in the speech. We will announce it tomorrow and I will spend a lot of time in California on this. Henry will come out and help. By the time I get back on the 7th we will be in shape for the speech. The American people want to know where they are and Congress needs to know what to do. The State of the Union message had nothing on foreign policy so it has been a long time since a major address on this subject.

(At this point the discussion turned to Southeast Asia; Deputy Secretary Ingersoll joined the meeting.)

President:

Bill, what is the situation on the ground in Vietnam?

Colby:

The Vietnamese Government has enough to control the area around Saigon and the Delta for this dry season but they are likely to be defeated in 1976. Thieu tried to extract his troupes from the highlands in time but his ploy failed. He was so afraid of leaks to the Communists that he told no one in advance, not even his own commanders who were caught by surprise. There was really only one battle. Thieu was aware of the superior comparative strength of the North Vietnamese in the highlands so he wanted to pull out of Pleiku and Kontum. He wanted to fight at Ban Me Thuot, but he could not do it. Among other problems, his C-130s were sidelined. So the move to the coast became a route instead of an orderly withdrawal. Then they were attacked in Quang Tri and Thieu was indecisive about Hue, first he was not going to fight and then he was and then he finally decided not to. This caused the commander of I Corps to become confused and angry. And now the airborne, their best troops, are being taken out of Danang to Nha Trang and Saigon. Thieu also wants to bring the Marine Division out of the perimeter around Danang. If so, Danang will surely fall. Originally, Thieu wanted to defend the enclaves, like General Gavin.

Kissinger:

Colby's estimate indicates that Thieu's pullback was designed to put him into a position to cut his losses and stagger through until 1976. He decided to do this because he was not getting enough support from the U.S. It was due to a lack of spare parts and ammunition. The idea of pulling back was not bad but when the move began, the refugees clogged the road and the troops did not know how to move anyway. Thieu was trying to get ready. His estimate and ours was the same; an all-out attack next year would finish him unless he got more support. So he wanted to stagger through this year and hope for a change.

Clements: He did not tell us anything at all and did not tell his own commanders.

Kissinger: The move could only have been carried out by surprise.

Colby: The refugee figures have fluctuated up and down, with the highest point coming after the Tet offensive. Now we are back up to over one million refugees.

President: Can the Vietnamese be economically self-sufficient in the smaller area?

Colby: Yes, the Delta is the big rice area. This would have been the first year of economic self-sufficiency had it not been for the suddenly deteriorating situation. The refugees are placing a big burden on the government but it is interesting to note that they are all fleeing toward the government. That shows clearly how they really feel about the Communists.

Clements: But the army may leave some \$200 million in arms and military equipment in Danang alone.

Colby: And there is some grumbling about Thieu in the army as well as in political circles. We may hear more about this.

President: You are not optimistic about Danang being held?

Colby: It should fall within two weeks even if the Marine Division stays instead of being pulled back to protect Saigon.

President: What about the evacuation of civilians?

Colby: There have been terrible mob scenes, both at the airport where they stormed loading aircraft and at the port where they jammed aboard ships. Some of the military have even shot their way on to the ships. A small number has been loaded but law and order has broken down completely and it is almost impossible.

Ingersoll: Reportedly 6,000 refugees got off on one ship this morning and another one is loading now.

President: What are these rumors about Ky coming back?

Kissinger: Ky is a boy scout, a flamboyant pop-off; he can not do the job.

Colby: Chief of Staff Vien and Prime Minister Khiem are possible candidates to replace Thieu.

Kissinger: Thieu has shown himself far and away the most capable of all the Vietnamese leaders I have known since 1965. No one else could do as well. He holds things together. He made a mistake in ordering the withdrawal from the highlands but he had no good choice. We were unable to give him the support he needed.

Colby: I agree with Henry. No one else is up to Thieu. Khiem would probably be the next best bet but he is some way from being up to Thieu.

General Brown: I agree with Colby's estimate about Danang. It will be hard to hold 10 days. We have gotten all the Americans out. A second ship is loading. There are two airfields, the main one at Marble Mountain and a small one. There is an ARVN battalion protecting the small one from the mobs and some C-47 flights are getting off. The mobs took the main field and may take the second one.

Colby: There is little fighting in the Delta and around Saigon. Unless the North Vietnamese move their reserve divisions into the Delta from the North, Saigon and the Delta can probably be held militarily but the big problem will come when the stories about Danang start to circulate in Saigon.

 Concerning Cambodia, Lon Nol is going to leave for Indonesia on April first. But there is no hope of talks with the Communists. They will see Lon Nol's departure as weakness and will push harder. The

new Communist proposal for a government would leave Sihanouk with no base at all, even if he was ostensibly the President.

Kissinger:

The war is now being conducted against Sihanouk. If it were a question of Lon Nol leaving and then our dealing with Sihanouk, it would be easy. But the Khmer Rouge want to erase all possible political base for Sihanouk and bring him back only as a front for themselves. The French told us at Martinique that Sihanouk wanted to negotiate but was unable due to the Khmer Rouge.

Colby:

The Cambodian airlift is suspended. The Communists could make the airfield unusable. The Government is losing ground east of the capital and also down along the river. The wet season starts in late May but the river will not come up until late July and by then it will probably be too late.

Schlesinger:

We are getting the first reports that the Cambodian troops are beginning to lose their drive. They are worried about U. S. support and losing their commanders. With adequate resupply they would have lasted through the dry season. But the morale is no good. The debate in Congress has hurt them badly. It is likely to collapse in two weeks.

Kissinger:

We have to make an evacuation decision. Ideally, from the political viewpoint, we should hold on until after your speech and after Congress makes a decision on our aid request. But if we wait it could collapse all at once before we can get our people out. But if we pull out, we will surely provoke a collapse. There are about 1100 people of all nationalities to be evacuated. We may need to decide next week.

General Brown:

The situation has changed. The outlook is bleaker. We need to decide now to take them out or we could have a major problem. There is one brigade of Marines in the Pacific. We could use U.S. forces to take out the residents and try to beat the mob out with helicopters.

President: How long will it take to get them out?

General Brown: If we have to use helicopters downtown, it would take one day to get 1200 out. If we have the airfield, it would take less time. They can get there on their own. This is a very difficult operation.

Vice President: The Marines might have to shoot civilians and that would create a huge uproar.

General Brown: The mob will be hard to control. We might have to shoot refugees in front of the press.

President: If you decide to use the airport, will you need to clear out the enemy?

General Brown: We may need air cover. If there is any firing on our people on the ground at the airport, we will attack. We will have aircraft in the air.

Clements: We can't tell whether or not the Khmer Rouge will fight us.

Kissinger: We need a joint estimate about the unravelling in Cambodia. If they can't hold, you need a chance to look at the situation. We need an estimate as to how long it can hold so we can decide on whether or not to order fixed wing aircraft in for evacuation.

Vice President: There is also the symbolism of Lon Nol leaving. This will have a bad effect on morale.

Kissinger: The Khmer Rouge will negotiate only unconditional surrender. They could get a negotiated settlement anytime but they refuse it. When Lon Nol leaves, it will demoralize the country. Long Boret will try to carry on but will fail.

Schlesinger: How long do we keep the Americans there after Lon Nol leaves?

Kissinger: We are pressing them to get out. Lon Nol wanted to stay but we had to press him to get out also, to calm the situation.

General Brown: We need a decision now on improving our intelligence capability. We can not wait for the Forty Committee, Mr. President. Will you authorize us to preposition intelligence collection aircraft now for us over North VietNam if we need it?

President: Yes, that is okay.

[Meeting ended at 1715.]

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UNITED STATES ARMY
THE CHIEF OF STAFF

4 April 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Vietnam Assessment

In accordance with your instructions, I visited South Vietnam during the period 28 March - 4 April. I have completed my assessment of the current situation there, analyzed what the Government of the Republic of Vietnam intends to do to counter the aggression from the North, assured President Thieu of your steadfast support in this time of crisis, and examined the options and actions open to the United States to assist the South Vietnamese.

The current military situation is critical, and the probability of the survival of South Vietnam as a truncated nation in the southern provinces is marginal at best. The GVN is on the brink of a total military defeat. However, the South is planning to continue to defend with their available resources, and, if allowed respite, will rebuild their capabilities to the extent that United States support in materiel will permit. I believe that we owe them that support.

We went to Vietnam in the first place to assist the South Vietnamese people--not to defeat the North Vietnamese. We reached out our hand to the South Vietnamese people, and they took it. Now they need that helping hand more than ever. By every measure we have been able to apply 20,000,000 people have told the world they fear for their lives, they cherish values that are closely allied with those of non-communist systems, they desperately seek the opportunity to continue their development of a way of life different from those who now live under North Vietnamese rule.

The present level of U.S. support guarantees GVN defeat. Of the \$700 million provided for FY 1975, the remaining \$150 million can be used for a short time for a major supply operation; however, if there is to be any real chance of

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success, an additional \$722 million is urgently needed to bring the South Vietnamese to a minimal defense posture to meet the Soviet and PRC supported invasion. Additional U.S. aid is within both the spirit and intent of the Paris Agreement, which remains the practical framework for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

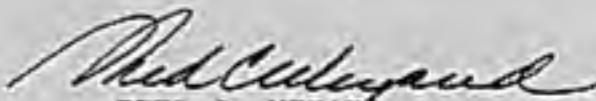
The use of U.S. military airpower to reinforce Vietnamese capabilities to blunt the North Vietnamese invasion would offer both a material and psychological assist to GVN and provide a much needed battlefield pause. I recognize, however, the significant legal and political implications which would attend the exercise of this option.

Given the speed at which events are moving, there is one other matter you should consider. For reasons of prudence, the United States should plan now for a mass evacuation of some 6,000 U.S. citizens and tens of thousands of South Vietnamese and Third Country Nationals to whom we have incurred an obligation and owe protection. The lessons of Danang indicate that this evacuation would require as a minimum a U.S. task force of a reinforced division supported by tactical air to suppress North Vietnamese artillery and anti-aircraft, as required. At the appropriate time, a public statement of this policy should be made and the North Vietnamese clearly warned "of U.S. intention to use force to safely evacuate personnel". Authority should be obtained to authorize appropriate use of military sanctions against North Vietnam if there is interference with the evacuation.

United States credibility as an ally is at stake in Vietnam. To sustain that credibility we must make a maximum effort to support the South Vietnamese now.

A more detailed analysis is contained in the attached report.

Respectfully,



FRED C. WEYAND
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

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REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

CONTENTS

| | | |
|------|--|-------|
| I. | THE CURRENT SITUATION | |
| A. | The Background | p. 2 |
| B. | The Present Situation | p. 4 |
| C. | North Vietnamese Plans and Intentions | p. 6 |
| II. | MAJOR PROBLEM AREAS | p. 7 |
| III. | CURRENT GVN PLANS AND INTENTIONS | p. 9 |
| IV. | CURRENT PROSPECTS | p. 10 |
| V. | THE US ROLE AND POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION | p. 11 |

INTRODUCTION

On 24 March 1975 you directed me to conduct a fact finding mission to the Republic of Vietnam. My task was to:

Assess the current military situation and probable North Vietnamese intentions during the current offensive.

Determine and assess what the Government of the Republic of Vietnam is now doing and intends to do in coping with this offensive and with its impact on both the military and civilian sectors.

Determine what the United States Government can do to bolster South Vietnamese military capabilities and to alleviate suffering among the civilian population.

Assure President Thieu that this Administration remains steadfast in its support of the efforts by the Republic of Vietnam to resist North Vietnamese aggression and that it will do what it can to provide the materiel assistance necessary for the defense of the republic.

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Authority NLF MR 80-18, Doc #2

By DAO NLF Date 11/19/80

I. THE CURRENT SITUATION

A. The Background

The Paris Agreement of 27 January 1973 marked not the beginning of peace in Vietnam, but instead the beginning of a Communist build-up of supplies and equipment for continued North Vietnamese military aggression in Vietnam. In the ensuing 26 months since the Agreement was signed, North Vietnam rebuilt the Ho Chi Minh Trail into a major all-weather supply artery. They built pipelines extending 330 miles into South Vietnam for movement of their POL. With this major supply system in full operation, they quadrupled their field artillery, greatly increased their anti-aircraft and sent six times as much armor into South Vietnam as they had in January 1973 (See Table A). At the same time, they increased their troop strength by almost 200,000 men. All of these actions were in direct violation of the Paris Agreement. The US, by contrast, did not fulfill its obligations to maintain South Vietnamese equipment and materiel levels as they were authorized to do under the Agreement. Ground ammunition declined by 30% from 179 thousand short tons at the cease fire to 126 thousand short tons when the current NVA offensive began. Shortages of POL and spare parts curtailed operations of the South Vietnamese Air Force by 50%.

The historical record outlined above set the stage for the current situation in South Vietnam. This situation is both fluid and fragile. It changed markedly during the month of March and has the potential for further rapid change in the weeks, or even days, immediately ahead.

On 10 March, the Communists launched "Phase II" of their 1975 campaign. Two North Vietnamese Army Divisions assaulted Ban Me Thuot, a strategic cross-roads in the western highlands, which was lightly defended by ARVN. At about the same time, North Vietnamese Army units west of Saigon initiated a systematic effort to eliminate the GVN presence, give the Communists a shortened, more secure infiltration corridor south into the Mekong Delta and, simultaneously, to interdict the only two roads between Saigon and Tay Ninh.

In mid-February, President Thieu sent Senator Tran Van Lam to the US as a private emissary to assess the mood of Congress with respect to Vietnam and the prospects for favorable Congressional action on aid legislation. Lam submitted a very pessimistic appraisal, which Thieu felt was confirmed by the early March votes of the House Democratic caucus. Thieu was digesting Lam's bleak estimate when the Communists launched the aforementioned "Phase II" attacks. Thieu saw his country faced with a major Communist offensive coinciding with a curtailment, and possible cessation, of US aid. He and his military advisors therefore decided that a drastic strategic retrenchment was essential to the GVN's survival.

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This new strategic concept entailed writing off most of the mountainous, sparsely populated portions of MR's 1 and 2 to concentrate the GVN's assets and resources on defending MR's 3 and 4 plus the coastal lowlands of MR's 1 and 2, the agriculturally productive areas of South Vietnam in which the bulk of the population resided. This strategy was sound in concept and Thieu's estimate of its necessity was correct. Its execution, however, was disastrous.

In a 13 March meeting with his MR 1 Commander, General Truong, President Thieu outlined his new strategic concept and his resultant decision to withdraw the Airborne Division from MR 1 to MR 3, despite General Truong's strong objection that the withdrawal of the airborne division would make the GVN's position in MR 1 untenable. During the next twelve days (13-25 March) there was vacillation, both in MR 1 and in Saigon, over what portions of MR 1 were to be held--and particularly, whether any attempt should be made to defend Hue. As a result of the changing orders he was receiving from Saigon, General Truong had to revise his troop deployment plans at least three times, even as the North Vietnamese Army attack was steadily increasing in intensity. Quang Tri City was evacuated in orderly fashion on 19 March, but before a new GVN defense line could be stabilized along the My Chanh River, territorial forces in the area began evaporating in the face of North Vietnamese pressure; Saigon recalled the last airborne brigade in MR 1, and an unravelling process began. North Vietnamese pressure mounted daily at a sharply increasing rate. Hue was evacuated on 25 March, but by then NVA units had cut Route 1 south of the city and the removal of Hue's 20,000 defenders, including most of ARVN's 1st Division, became largely dependent on haphazard, improvised sealift operations. During this same period, over-extended GVN units in Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai Provinces, were being dispersed or defeated piecemeal by advancing NVA forces.

The GVN's presence in MR 1 collapsed into an enclave at Da Nang. What was left of the GVN's effective strength in that region--basically the Marine Division and a part of the 3rd ARVN Division--tried to set up a defense of Da Nang, but the effort was not successful. Arrayed against the GVN's 10,000 odd organized defenders were over 30,000 NVA troops advancing with the momentum of success. Further compounding the situation's problems was the influx of more than a million refugees. With a total of close to 2 million people increasingly desperate to get out, panic spread and on 28 March order collapsed. NVA tanks began moving into the town soon thereafter. No more than 50,000 refugees were brought out by air or by sea, and the GVN succeeded in extracting approximately 22,000 troops, including about 9,000 marines and 4,000 - 5,000 troops from the 2nd and 3rd ARVN divisions, but the fate of the remainder of Da Nang's civil and military population is unknown.

In MR 2, President Thieu and his regional commander, General Phu, met at Cam Ranh Bay on 14 March to discuss the situation in light of the loss of

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Ban Me Thuot. At that meeting, President Thieu outlined his new strategic concept to withdraw from the highlands and consolidate GVN forces for defense of vital coastal areas. The exact wording of the President's orders are not known, but General Phu interpreted them as authorizing at his discretion the immediate, total evacuation of Pleiku and Kontum Provinces, for which no plans or preparations had been made. The exodus began in the next two days, with the evacuating ARVN forces following Highway 14 and Route 7B across Phu Bon and Phu Yen Provinces to the coast at Tuy Hoa. Compounding the already severe difficulties inherent in this unplanned exodus, 7B was a secondary road, virtually unused for years, with many bridges out and no fords prepared. Command and control broke down. The six ranger groups and one infantry regiment from Kontum and Pleiku became interspersed among the increasingly desperate 200,000 odd civilians fleeing with the exfiltrating column. At least two and possibly three NVA regiments wheeled northward from Darlac to Phu Bon and Phu Yen Provinces to harass the column, systematically and methodically engaging the dispersed ARVN military units, none of which were combat effective when the column's lead elements entered Tuy Hoa City on 26 March. The carnage inflicted en route on the hapless civilian refugees was horrendous.

While the above events were in train, the GVN diverted one airborne brigade from the Hue area to Khanh Hoa Province to block the two to four NVA regiments pursuing the remnants of the 23rd ARVN eastward from Ban Me Thuot across Darlac Province. The 23rd Division already battered by its stand at Ban Me Thuot, had virtually ceased to exist as an organized unit by the time its survivors began trickling into Nha Trang.

B. The Present Situation

The military situation existing in the first week in April has to be assessed in light of what happened in March. Amid the general chaos in MR's 1 and 2, a number of ARVN units performed well. Without the effectiveness of the Marines and some elements of the 3rd ARVN, no one would have gotten out of Da Nang. In Ban Me Thuot, elements of the 23rd ARVN held out for more than a week against two NVA divisions. The 40th and 41st regiments of ARVN's 22nd division fought savagely to delay superior NVA forces from breaking through to the coast at Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh Province. The net effect of March's events, however, has been severely adverse both in concrete terms and, even more, in psychological ones.

Communist forces have the momentum of success and though they have suffered casualties which may have been heavy, they are being augmented daily by fresh replacements and supplies from North Vietnam (Table, TAB A). During the last three weeks in March, five ARVN divisions, twelve Ranger Groups and two brigade equivalents of armor have been rendered combat ineffective. Officers and men from these units can be regrouped into new formations, but virtually all of their equipment has been lost. Many other GVN units have suffered heavy losses in personnel and equipment.

As of 1 April, Communist combat forces in South Vietnam, predominately North Vietnamese Army units and personnel, totalled over 200,000 organized

S E C R E T

SECRET

into 123 regiments--71 infantry, 7 sapper, 4 armor, 16 artillery and 25 AAA*.

Comparable, currently effective ARVN ground combat forces total just over 54,000 troops, organized in 39 regiments/brigades or equivalents--18 infantry regiments, 2 armored brigades, 5 ranger groups, 3 airborne and 2 marine brigades**. Given replacement equipment, effective ARVN combat manpower and unit strengths can be augmented by new units formed out of the personnel remnants of the units dispersed during the March battles in MR's 1 and 2, but this will take time. As of 1 April, the predominantly North Vietnamese Communist combat force in South Vietnam outnumbers equivalent GVN forces just under 3 to 1 in size.

Territorially, all of MR 1 has been lost by the GVN, along with most of MR 2***. The GVN currently holds a coastal lowland strip running southward from about Cam Ranh to the MR 3 border, plus the southern portion of Tuyen Duc Province. Lam Dong Province fell on 1 April, Dalat City was evacuated on 2 April and what is left of Tuyen Duc Province is disintegrating.

In MR 3, Phuoc Long Province was lost in January. In March there was further territorial erosion in a broad arc about 50 miles west, north and east of Saigon. The fighting in MR 3 has been sporadic and, on occasion, heavy but there, the ARVN has basically held its own during the past three weeks. In MR 3, ARVN forces do not yet face the problem of being significantly outnumbered. Though the Communists are already applying severe pressure in several areas (e.g., Tay Ninh and around Xuan Loc) and are clearly planning a round of new attacks, GVN forces by and large are holding their own and fighting well, and in the process have badly mauled a few Communist units. Barring a wholesale morale erosion on the part of

*See Table, Tab B, for details. This does not include administrative service and combat support personnel, nor does it include Viet Cong provincial and district territorial units.

**See Table, Tab C, for details. These figures do not include the South Vietnamese Air Force or Navy, nor do they include the Regional and Popular Forces, Police Field Forces or other miscellaneous non-ARVN units. Strength estimates for the GVN Regional Forces are included in the table as part of the GVN's overall armed strength. With some specific exceptions, these territorial units, however, were ineffective during the March campaigns in MR's 1 and 2, often dispersing and dissolving at the first serious probes (or even appearance) of North Vietnamese Army line units. ARVN commanders in MR's 3 and 4 generally doubt the territorials would be more effective in the face of heavy North Vietnamese attacks in the lower half of the country. As a consequence, territorial forces are being upgraded into the regular ARVN structure.

***See Maps (Tab D).

SECRET

S E C R E T

ARVN forces or a significant further increase in Communist strength beyond that of the past week, the GVN should be able to hold the situation in MR 3 about as it stood on 3 April, at least for the immediate future.

In the Mekong Delta (MR 4), the past several weeks have not seen any appreciable change. Opposing regular combat forces are about evenly matched (See Tables, Tabs B & C). The tactical situation could deteriorate rapidly if additional Communist units come into the area or if the GVN should redeploy to MR 3 any one of the three ARVN divisions now assigned to MR 4.

Militarily, the GVN is on the defensive and beleaguered. March's military reverses and their attendant consequences--the loss of territory, military and civilian casualties, and the enormous population dislocation of the more than two million civilian refugees--have had a heavy, adverse impact on the whole political and social structure of South Vietnam. Just how heavy, extensive or lasting is hard to tell, partly because the South Vietnamese people are in a state of shock and because a full knowledge of what actually has happened in MR's 1 and 2 is not yet widespread, even in Saigon, let alone the populated rural areas in MR 3 or the still prosperous and agriculturally busy Mekong Delta.

C. North Vietnamese Plans and Intentions

North Vietnam's intentions are hard to discern and its next moves are probably the subject of active discussion now being conducted by the Lao Dong Politburo in Hanoi. Such evidence as is available suggests that Hanoi is weighing two broad options:

a. Exert a maximum effort to exploit the recent tactical successes and present battlefield advantage of the North Vietnamese Army in an all out effort to collapse the GVN and eliminate it as a functioning political entity.

b. Consolidate recent gains and try for one or two more major victories (e.g., disperse the 25th ARVN Division and/or capture Tay Ninh), then call for negotiations on terms tantamount to a GVN surrender, planning to try again for military victory later in 1975 or 1976 if the GVN can not be pressured politically into accepting some form of "coalition government" that would give the Communists de facto political control over South Vietnam.

From the time the Paris Agreement was signed in 1973, Hanoi has been steadily improving its military capabilities in South Vietnam through a continuous improvement of its logistic infrastructure (roads, trails, depots, etc., in both Laos and South Vietnam) and a continuous infusion of supplies, equipment and troops--all in direct violation of Article 7 of the 1973 Agreement. This flow has peaked and valleyed over the past 26 months, but it has never stopped.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

In the summer of 1974, when the GVN's overall position looked promising, this manpower and supply flow augmenting North Vietnam's invading expeditionary force in the South was down. It began to pick up soon after last summer's political developments within the United States and diminishing Congressional support for continued assistance to South Vietnam. The logistic flow of men and materiel out of North Vietnam--and, hence, the North Vietnamese Army's capabilities in the south--began to pick up in the latter part of 1974. The pace has been intense since the beginning of 1975, was increased in February and March, and is now going at full throttle.

Hanoi certainly had planned a significant level of offensive action this spring. In retrospect, the "Phase I" January campaign (which overran Phuoc Long Province), among other things, seems to have been a test of whether the US would react to what even Hanoi must have considered a blatant violation of the 1973 Paris Agreement. Judging from the Communists subsequent behavior--e.g., the sharply rising build-up, introduction of North Vietnamese strategic reserve units, the assault on Ban Me Thuot with two NVA divisions (one recently brought south from Hanoi's strategic reserve) and the increasing stridency with which the Communists have played the propaganda theme of US "impotence"--Hanoi seems to have decided that the US was too preoccupied with other problems to react significantly to anything North Vietnam did in Indochina.

Official party directives and high level instructions issued in January and February and even through the third week in March suggest that at least the initial objectives of the 1975 campaign were something less than near term total victory--i.e., an improved territorial position (probably including capture of Tay Ninh City), harassment and attrition of ARVN, and heavy overall pressure on the GVN. The main goal of this campaign appeared to be that of putting the Communists in a commanding position from which they could demand negotiations leading to a coalition government, and, if such were not forthcoming, from which they could launch a "final" assault in 1976.

How much Hanoi's goals may have escalated or its appetite been whetted by the past month's events in South Vietnam--and in the United States--is impossible to tell, particularly since even Hanoi has not had time to digest the most recent developments. The rate at which men and supplies are coming down from North Vietnam into South Vietnam, however, certainly suggests that Hanoi intends to keep pressing its invading expeditionary force's attacks.

II. MAJOR PROBLEM AREAS

The GVN is faced with an interlocking web of rapidly mounting problems which fall into three broad areas.

First, there are physical or concrete problems. The most important of these is the North Vietnamese Army--including its present size, increasing

S E C R E T

SECRET

strength and aggressive activity. Then, there is the sheer magnitude of the past three weeks' losses in personnel and equipment which--unless or until replaced--puts an increasingly debilitated ARVN in a worsening position against a growing North Vietnamese threat. In the civil sphere, there is the concomitant magnitude of the refugee flow, uprooting close to ten per cent of the entire population, whose urgent needs for food, clothing, shelter, and medical care place enormous strains on the machinery of government. Meeting these refugees' immediate needs is in itself a massive problem but resettling them and absorbing them in the areas still under GVN control is an even more formidable task.

There are many other concrete problems that are intrinsically important (e.g., keeping the roads and lines of communication open, food supplies moving, maintaining basic law and order in areas inundated with refugees, controlling or checking Viet Cong subversion and terrorism in areas not under immediate conventional attack), but these are overshadowed by the three "physical" problems mentioned above.

In addition, there are a host of burgeoning, related problems which might be termed "administrative". These involve providing the leadership, guidance and direction necessary to cope with the physical problems noted above. They also involve the leadership and administration, military and civil, necessary to rally a nation after a series of defeats, check the spread of despondency and hopelessness, develop a sense of national unity and common purpose, and wage a war for survival. In a Vietnamese context, the situation requires the kind of leadership and effective administration Churchill and his War Cabinet gave Great Britain after Dunkirk and the fall of France. To date (as outlined in Section III below) this kind of leadership and administration is not evident--and in Vietnam, there is no English Channel to check the onrushing tide of invasion or provide a respite for regroupment.

Then there is a complex of psychological and attitudinal problems which, in the end, may prove the most important of all. In refugee-clogged coastal MR 2, the kind of fear and panic which erupted in Da Nang also rose to the surface before the GVN's position north of Cam Ranh collapsed. In MR 3 and Saigon, the people are shocked and bewildered. They may not yet have a sense of immediate personal danger and crisis, but that emotion is beginning to spread with increasing rapidity. In the Delta, where news of northern developments takes time to circulate, life is prosperous and there is no change in the pattern of the past two years' events yet perceptible to the ordinary citizen, people are perplexed and troubled but do not yet feel immediately threatened. The GVN has a little time in which to act before the full story of what has happened in MR 1 and MR 2 becomes widely known throughout the rest of the country; but the time is very short.

In the Army, the psychological problems are more focused and more intense. Army units in coastal MR 2 know they may soon be overwhelmed. Despite certain local tactical successes, the units in MR 3 could fall prey to a

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sense of defeatism and hopelessness. In the Delta, senior ARVN commanders assert that the morale of their troops is still good and that when attacked they will fight, but when talked to privately by Americans they know, and whose discretion they trust, these same commanders caution that their troops' morale could not stand the news of major defeats in MR 3.

One of the most serious psychological and attitudinal problems at all levels, military and civilian, is the belief that the South Vietnamese have been abandoned, and even betrayed, by the United States. The Communists are using every possible device of propaganda and psychological warfare to foster this view. The higher one goes in the social or hierarchical scale the greater the degree of sharpness and focus to such sentiments. Much of this emotion is keyed on the 1973 Paris Agreement and subsequent US withdrawal. It is widely believed that the GVN was forced to sign this agreement as a result of a private US-North Vietnamese deal under which the US was allowed to withdraw its forces and get its prisoners back in return for abandoning South Vietnam. This sense of abandonment has been intensified by what is widely perceived as a lack of public US acknowledgment of South Vietnam's current plight or willingness to provide needed support.

All of the above problems are interacting. One result of this interaction is a spreading loss of confidence in the GVN's top leadership, a sentiment felt throughout the politically aware population and mounting rapidly in the Army. President Thieu's inner core of senior advisors is felt to be disgraced. With every passing day, more of this bitterness and resentment is being focused on President Thieu himself. There is a general awareness that any coup attempt, even if successful, would probably be the ultimate disaster; but the odds are mounting that unless this crisis of confidence is dispelled, President Thieu will have to step down.

III. CURRENT GVN PLANS AND INTENTIONS

The GVN has what it calls a "strategic plan" but it is being revised almost daily in the light of events. A week ago (25 March) it envisioned an enclave at Da Nang and a southern defense line anchored on the coast at Binh Dinh or, failing that, just below Tuy Hoa in Phu Yen Province. The contemplated line was to swing through Tuyen Duc and Lam Dong Provinces, then to Xuan Loc in Long Khanh Province and over to Tay Ninh. Since the plan was developed, Da Nang has fallen, the GVN's position in coastal MR 2 has collapsed north of Cam Ranh.

The GVN intends to reorganize and refit the ARVN and Marine units decimated in last month's battles with all possible speed. It also intends to take other steps to augment ARVN's strength by upgrading significant numbers of territorial forces and Ranger groups. The success of all of this will depend on the degree to which RVNAF is able to correct serious deficiencies in command and control and its capacity to translate plans into coordinated action. President Thieu and General Vien are aware of the need and have promised corrective action.

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The refugee problem reflects similar deficiencies in planning and administration. There is a concern and desire to be helpful and sources of international sympathy and support which could be tapped, including funds, medical personnel, supplies, etc.. Dr. Dan--the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for refugees--is doing what he can, but there is, as yet, no internal GVN mechanism capable of addressing the intricate details and systematic follow through this enormous and complex problem requires. As a result, the burden tends to fall on a few officials, including local provincial ones, some of whom have been imaginative in coping with immediate crises but whose efforts are individual, fragmented and not part of an integrated whole.

Propaganda and psychological warfare and even essential governmental communication with the GVN's own people show similar deficiencies in overall concept and systematic follow through.

The GVN, in short, has hopes and aspirations, and a desire to cope, but few of these are focused, channelled or truly organized. The government, especially the bureaucracy, is in a state of shock and bewilderment and the top echelons do not seem to have a full realization or comprehension of the magnitude of the GVN's many problems.

IV. CURRENT PROSPECTS

What happens in South Vietnam over the next month or so, let alone a longer time frame, depends very much on what is done--or not done--by North Vietnam, the GVN, and the United States during the next two to three weeks and even the next few days.

Unless North Vietnamese Forces are somehow checked in battle or Hanoi induced to pause by some form of diplomatic or other suasion, the North Vietnamese will defeat the GVN militarily. There is no evidence that the North Vietnamese are developing logistic problems or beginning to outrun their supplies. The southward march of one, let alone two, of Hanoi's five divisions now in MR 1 would be enough to seal the fate of the GVN's hold on coastal MR 2. If one of Hanoi's five divisions already in MR 2 were brought down into MR 3, particularly if augmented with more armor and artillery, that would tilt the present balance of forces in MR 3. The GVN's forces in the Delta have all they can handle with the North Vietnamese troops already in that region, and MR 4 could not hold if MR 3 collapsed in the wake of defeats in MR's 1 and 2.

The above picture may be altered as the GVN deploys into MR 3 units reconstituted from the remnants of the ones recovered from MR 1 and MR 2. This, however, requires time to reorganize and equip. The odds are that in pure capability terms, the North Vietnamese can move and commit existing divisions within SVN faster than the GVN can form new ones.

As for the GVN, some steps--dramatic and demonstrably effective--have to be taken not just to prevent any near term deterioration in the GVN's

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military position in MR 3, but also--and perhaps more important--to give the population, and the RVNAF, a psychological lift and confidence in the GVN's top leadership. In the morale sphere, South Vietnam--at least in MR 3, including Saigon--is very near the brink of a slide into the kind of hopelessness and defeatism that could rapidly unravel the whole structure.

V. THE US ROLE AND POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

What the US does, or does not do, in the days immediately ahead will probably be as critical a determinant of the next few weeks' events as the actions or non-actions of Saigon or Hanoi. The US, alone, can not save South Vietnam but it can, however inadvertently, seal its doom.

My specific recommendations fall into two different categories. There are short term actions--partly physical but primarily psychological--needed to give South Vietnam a morale lift and, if possible, to induce Hanoi to pause. This buys nothing but time, but at the moment that time is urgently needed. Secondly, there are longer term actions, mainly material though still with a strong psychological dimension, which are necessary if South Vietnam is to have any hope of physically surviving the North Vietnamese onslaught or negotiating any settlement short of unconditional surrender.

The essential and immediate requirement is Vietnamese perception of US support. Perceptions are important in every respect. A perception of diminishing US support for South Vietnam encouraged the North Vietnamese to launch their current offensive. It was this same perception that caused the Republic of Vietnam to begin withdrawal from the dispersed and exposed positions in the northern provinces. These perceptions were shaped by the following actions: Immediately following the signing of the Paris Agreement, \$1.6 billion was requested to meet the requirements of the South Vietnamese in FY 1974; \$1.126 billion was provided--70% of the needs. A subsequent request for a \$500 million supplemental was ultimately turned down. For the current fiscal year, \$1.6 billion was requested to maintain a viable Vietnamese military capability for defense; \$700 million was provided--44% of the stated requirement. These and related actions helped generate the crisis of confidence that precipitated the GVN strategy of retrenchment.

Now, the key to Vietnamese national survival is the GVN's ability to stabilize the situation, and to bring their military resources to bear in blunting the North Vietnamese offensive. Their ability to stabilize the situation hinges, to a very large extent, on the ability to convince the average soldier and citizen that all is not lost, and that the North Vietnamese can be stopped. Though this is largely a task for the Government of Vietnam, the actions of the US are vital in restoring confidence.

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The action which the US could take which would have the greatest immediate effect on Vietnamese perceptions--North and South--would be the use of US air power to blunt the current NVA offensive. Even if confined to South Vietnam and carried out for only a limited time, such attacks would take a severe toll on the North Vietnamese expeditionary force's manpower and supplies, and have a dramatic morale impact on North Vietnam's invading troops. These attacks would also give Hanoi's leaders' pause and raise concerns, which do not now exist, about the risks involved in ignoring a formal agreement made with the United States.

South Vietnamese military leaders at all levels have repeatedly cited the importance of B-52 attacks to the conduct of a successful defense against superior enemy forces and there is sound military justification for such a point of view.

The above comments convey only a military assessment. I recognize, however, the significant legal and political implications which would attend the exercise of such an action.

One important step that the US should take is to make it clear that the US supports South Vietnam. This should include positive statements by the President and other senior US officials. Sagging Vietnamese morale was clearly bolstered by the arrival of the United States team sent by the President to investigate the situation. Additional US actions of this nature would highlight US concern. In addition to statements from the Executive Branch, there should be an effort to insure that a broad spectrum of concern is evident in the United States. Support from Members of Congress; public statements from responsible individuals both in and outside of the Government; and understanding in the US press will foster changing US perceptions of the situation in Vietnam.

This effort could stress three principal themes:

--The Vietnamese people, with first-hand knowledge of life under both the Thieu Government and Communism, have clearly indicated their choice by "voting with their feet," as the East Germans did before the introduction of the Berlin Wall. The mass exodus from the northern provinces, in the face of hardships, danger and intense human suffering, is a true sign of their feelings. In their choice, none have fled north to Hanoi and North Vietnam--where there is no fighting, where there are no refugee columns, and where war has not touched since the Paris Agreement. The question is not an academic one to the individual Vietnamese; it is one of life and death. By their actions they have chosen liberty and possible death.

--South Vietnam is fighting a defensive war. US materiel is used to defend South Vietnam, while Soviet and Chinese tanks and war materiel are being used by the North Vietnamese for open, naked, defiant aggression. It is this North Vietnamese invasion, not the actions of the South Vietnamese, that has already required the Administration to seek additional support from the Congress.

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--We should continue to emphasize the effect of Vietnam on the credibility of any US commitment. The world clearly understands past US commitments to Vietnam. Our expenditure of lives and resources in pursuit of this commitment is well known to all. The governments of the world know the past, but will see any present inability to support the Vietnamese in their crisis of survival as a failure of US will and resolve. If we make no effort, our future credibility as perceived by ally and potential adversary alike will be lost for years to come.

Statements of US support are important, but it is also essential that the message be validated with concrete actions to demonstrate that the United States stands behind her ally. While the ultimate availability of military resources will rest with supplemental appropriations in the Congress for the current fiscal year, there is more than \$150 million available from the \$700 million voted in the Defense Appropriations Act. This money can be used to meet the most immediate needs now and in the next few weeks. However, the rapid expenditure of the remaining funds will soon exhaust US capabilities to provide support. A supplemental appropriations bill, probably for about \$722 million, is urgently needed for basic military necessities to provide a chance for the survival of the Republic of Vietnam. Details of the requirement follow:

The present offensive campaign by the NVA has caused serious materiel losses which must be replaced now:

--Five ARVN Divisions have been destroyed or rendered combat ineffective and another division has been only partially salvaged. While at this writing an exact numerical count of personnel and equipment losses is impossible to obtain, the following are the presently known materiel losses:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| GROUND MUNITIONS (DEPOT STOCKS ONLY) | \$ 129.0 M |
| INDIVIDUAL & CREW SERVED WEAPONS | 24.6 M |
| ARTILLERY | 16.0 M |
| TRACK VEHICLES | 85.0 M |
| WHEEL VEHICLES | 77.0 M |
| COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT | 15.6 M |
| POL | 6.3 M |
| MEDICAL | 7.9 M |
| ENGINEER | 1.8 M |
| GENERAL SUPPLY STOCKS | <u>110.5 M</u> |
| TOTAL | \$ 473.7 M |

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--In addition the VNAF has lost 393 aircraft valued at \$176.3 million, \$52.8 million of air munitions, and \$68.6 million of spare parts and support equipment.

--During the current offensive the Vietnamese Navy lost three craft valued at \$2.4 million and \$5.4 million in supplies and support equipment.

The total estimated cost for RVNAF military supplies and equipment lost in the current offensive is \$779.2 million. These losses do not include basic load munitions, non-divisional support units or fixed facilities such as airfields, ports and military installations.

The GVN believes the current offensive can be blunted with military forces currently available and to be reconstituted. They contemplate retaining a reduced RVN consisting of the southeastern portion of the MR 2 lowlands, the southern two-thirds of MR 3 and all of MR 4. The territory to be held contains the bulk of the population and has the requisites for a viable political and economic entity. They are working on a reorganization plan which, if successfully implemented, could provide military protection for this truncated RVN.

At this writing, the GVN reorganization plan envisages reconstitution of four infantry divisions, conversion of 12 ranger groups into four ranger divisions and the upgrading of 27 mobile Regional Force Groups into 27 infantry regiments. To be effective, implementation must begin immediately. Under the critical assumption that the GVN can stabilize the present military situation, with the materiel and manpower resources presently at their disposal and within the limited remaining FY75 appropriation, they need immediate additional materiel replenishments which will require new authorizations and appropriations. Our estimate of these immediate requirements is:

| | |
|---|------------|
| --Equipment for four infantry divisions: | \$ 138.6 M |
| --Conversion of 12 ranger groups to four divisions: | 118.0 M |
| --Conversion of 27 RF groups to 27 ARVN Regiments: | 69.6 M |
| --Ground munitions to sustain combat operations and reconstitute stockage levels: | 198.0 M |
| --Air munitions to sustain combat operations and reconstitute stockage levels: | 21.0 M |
| --POL products to sustain combat operations and insure adequate stockage levels: | 10.4 M |
| --General supplies and repair parts: | 21.0 M |

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| | |
|---|---------------|
| --Medical Support (Hospitals & Supplies): | \$ 7.0 M |
| --Aircraft (two C-130's), spares, ground support equipment, and airfield repairs: | 44.9 M |
| --Cost of transportation of supplies and equipment: | <u>93.7 M</u> |
| TOTAL | \$ 722.2 M |

We estimate that the bulk of the above materials can be delivered to RVN within 45 days of availability of funds. It must be understood that without this supplemental funding, RVNAF's ammunition supply will be exhausted before the end of this fiscal year at the present level of combat. Reconstitution of combat ineffective units will not be possible without supplemental funding.

Beyond satisfying these immediate military requirements we should seek separate appropriations for refugee relief. The GVN should not be burdened with the expense of resettling over one million refugees when its resources are already needed for its fight for survival.

There is not and can not be any guarantee that the actions I propose will be sufficient to prevent total North Vietnamese conquest. The effort, however, should be made. What is at stake in Vietnam now is America's credibility as an ally. We must not abandon our goal of a free and independent South Vietnam.

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NVA/INCREASED NVA WEAPONS
IN RVN SINCE CEASEFIRE
 (All Numbers Rough Estimates)

| WEAPONS | ON HAND 23 JAN 73 | MOVED IN THRU 1 MAR 75 | TOTAL 1 MAR 75 | MOVED IN 1 MAR-1 APR 75 | TOTAL INCREASE 23 JAN 73-1 APR 75 | MOVING SOUTH 1 APR 75 |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Field Arty Pieces (85, 122, 130MM) | 85-105 | 270-380 | 355-485 | 15 | 285-395 | 30-40 |
| Anti-Aircraft 12.8, 14.5, 23, 37, 57, 100MM | 700 | 800 | 1500 | 250 | 1050 | 250 |
| SA-2 | --- | 15-25 LCIRS | 15-25 LCIRS | 16-25 LCIRS | 31-50 LCIRS | Poss 50-75 LCIRS |
| SA-3 | --- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | |
| ARMOR PT76, T54, T63, etc. | 90-115 | 575-635 | 665-750 | 20-30 | 595-665 | Unk |

| | ARRIVED BETWEEN 28 JAN 73 AND 1 MAR 75 | ARRIVED DURING MARCH 1975 | DETECTED APRIL ARRIVALS | ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL APRIL ARRIVALS | TOTAL |
|---|---|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------|
| PERSONNEL INFILTRATION ARRIVALS IN RVN | 195,400 | 19,400 | 23,400 | 10,000 | 248,300 |

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DAO VC/NVA OB
MAJOR COMBAT UNITS IN RVN

| | JAN 73 | | MAR 75 | | | APR 75 (Change over Mar 75) | | | Moving to SVN | |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| | DIVS | REGTS | DIVS | BDES | Regts | Divs | Bdes | REGTS | Divs | REGTS |
| COUNTRY-WIDE | 17 (16 Inf, 1 AA) | 97 (85 Inf, 12 AA) | 20 (+3) (15 Inf, 1 Arty 3 AA, 1 Sap) | 4 (+4) (1 Inf, 2 Arty, 1 Armor) | 117 (+20) (65 Inf, 16 Arty, 4 Armor, 24 AA, 1 SAM, 7 Sap) | 22 (+2 Inf) | 4 (No Change) | 123 (+6 Inf) | 4 (3 Inf, 1 AA) | 16 (12 Inf, 3 AA, 1 SAM) |
| MR-1 | 9 (8 Inf, 1 AA) | 50 (39 Inf/ Arty, 11 AA) | 6 (-3) (4 Inf, 2 AD) | 4 (+4) (1 Inf, 2 Arty, 1 Armor) | 46 (-4) (20 Inf, 6 Arty, 2 Armor, 17 AA, 1 SAM) | 6 (No Change) | 4 (No Change) | 50 (+1 Inf) | | |
| MR-2 | 3 Inf | 10 Inf/ Arty | 4 Inf (+1) | - | 23 (-15) (15 Inf, 3 Arty, 1 Armor, 4 AA) | 6 (+2) (1 Inf, 1 AA) | - | 27 (+4) (3 Inf, 1 AA) | | |
| MR-3 | 2 Inf | 17 (16 Inf/ Arty, 1 AA) | 7 (+5) (4 Inf, 1 Arty, 1 Sap, 1 AA) | - | 31 (-14) (15 Inf, 5 Arty, 1 Armor, 1 Sap, 3 AA) | 8 (+1 Inf) | - | 34 (+3 Inf) | | |
| MR-4 | 3 Inf | 20 Inf | 3 Inf (No Change) | - | 18 (-2) (15 Inf, 1 Sap, 2 Arty) | 3 Inf (no Change) | - | 18 (No Change) | | |

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TABLE

COMBAT UNITS IN SOUTH VIETNAM *

(NO. OF UNITS) (STRENGTH)

END-JANUARY 1975

| | MR 1 | MR 2 | MR 3 | MR 4 | RVN |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Inf Regts | (10) 16,000 | (7) 11,500 | (9) 14,800 | (9) 10,800 | (35) 53,100 |
| Armd Bdes | (1) 1,300 | (1) 2,000 | (1) 1,700 | (1) 1,100 | (4) 6,100 |
| Arty Regts | (6) 7,800 | (3) 3,900 | (4) 5,200 | (4) 5,000 | (17) 21,900 |
| Rgr Gps | (4) 4,800 | (7) 8,400 | (4) 5,000 | (0) | (15) 18,200 |
| Abn Bdes | (3) 4,500 | (0) | (0) | (0) | (3) 4,500 |
| Mar Bdes | (3) 6,000 | (0) | (0) | (0) | (3) 6,000 |
| TOTAL | (27) 40,400 | (18) 25,800 | (18) 26,700 | (14) 16,900 | (77) 109,800 |
| RF BNS | 20,000 | 32,000 | 33,000 | 40,000 | 125,000 |

END-FEBRUARY 1975

| | MR 1 | MR 2 | MR 3 | MR 4 | RVN |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Inf Regts | (10) 16,000 | (7) 11,500 | (9) 14,800 | (9) 10,800 | (35) 53,100 |
| Armd Bdes | (1) 1,300 | (1) 2,000 | (1) 1,700 | (1) 1,100 | (4) 6,100 |
| Arty Regts | (6) 7,800 | (3) 3,900 | (4) 5,200 | (4) 5,000 | (17) 21,900 |
| Rgr Gps | (4) 4,800 | (8) 9,600 | (4) 5,000 | (0) | (16) 19,400 |
| Abn Bdes | (3) 4,500 | (0) | (1) 1,500 | (0) | (4) 6,000 |
| Mar Bdes | (3) 6,000 | (0) | (1) 2,200 | (0) | (4) 8,200 |
| TOTAL | (27) 40,400 | (19) 27,000 | (20) 30,400 | (14) 16,900 | (80) 114,700 |
| RF BNS | 19,000 | 31,000 | 32,000 | 34,000 | 116,000 |

END-MARCH 1975

| | MR 1 | MR 2 | MR 3 | MR 4 | RVN |
|------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Inf Regts | (0) | (0) | (9) 11,800 | (9) 12,000 | (18) 23,800 |
| Armd Bdes | (0) | (0) | (1) 1,500 | (1) 1,500 | (2) 3,000 |
| Arty Regts | (0) | (0) | (5) 6,500 | (4) 5,000 | (9) 11,500 |
| Rgr Gps | (0) | (0) | (5) 6,200 | (0) | (5) 6,200 |
| Abn Bdes | (0) | (0) | (3) 4,500 | (0) | (3) 4,500 |
| Mar Bdes | (0) | (0) | (0) 5,000 | (2) | (2) 5,000 |
| TOTAL | (0) 0 | (0) 0 | (23) 35,500 | (16) 18,500 | (39) 54,000 |
| RF BNS | 0 | 0 | 31,000 | 32,000 | 63,000 |

* Includes only personnel in combat effective units, does not include stragglers, processsees, trainees, etc.

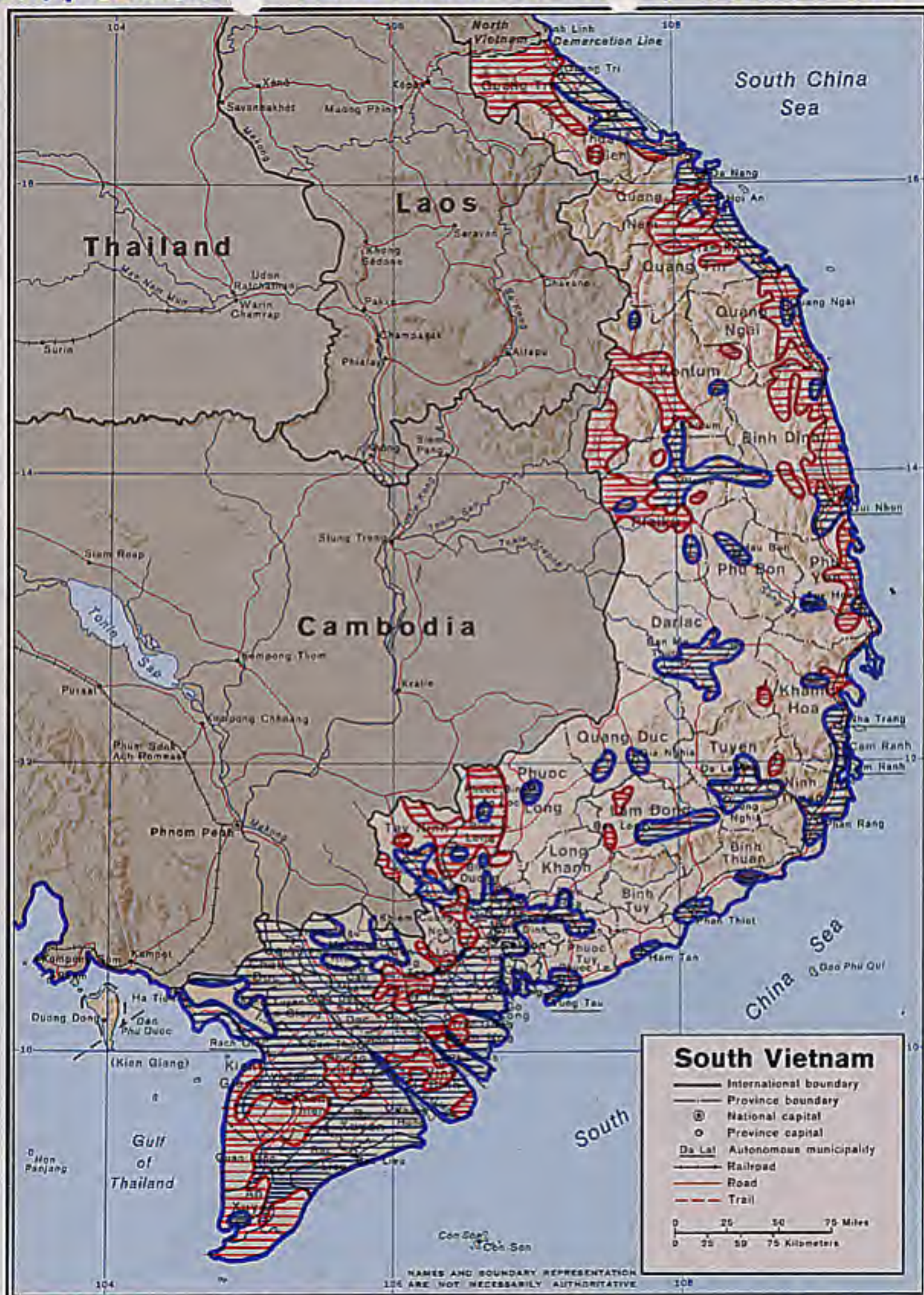
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Authority NLF MR 90-12, Doc. # 5

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By DAD NLF Date 11/19/80

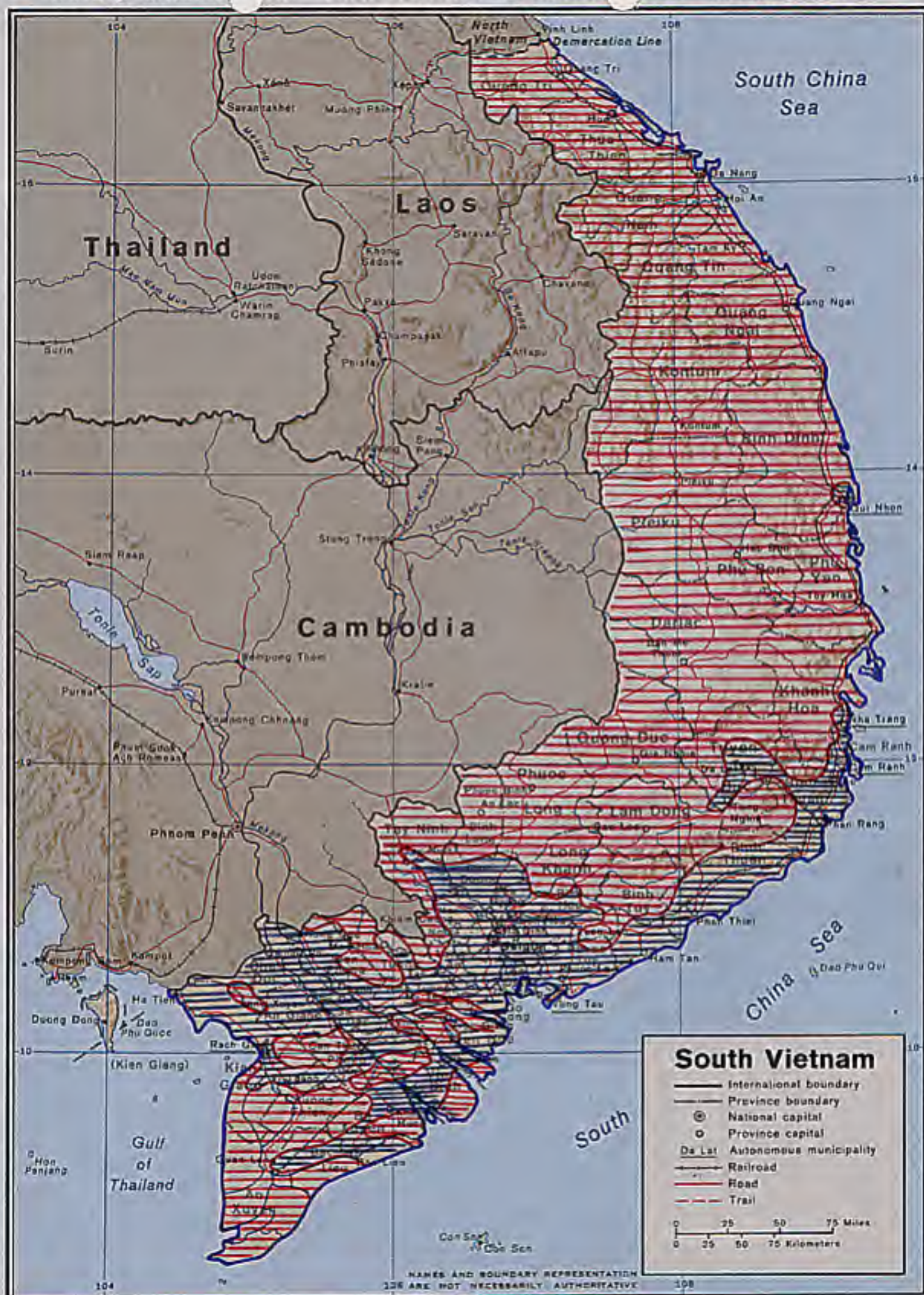
GVN & COMMUNIST TERRITORIAL CONTROL * / JANUARY 1973



Base 500877 5-72

* WHITE AREAS ARE CONSIDERED UNPOPULATED

GVN & COMMUNIST TERRITORIAL CONTROL / 31 MARCH 1975



MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

211/
DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By FOI, NARA, Date 2/10/00~~TOP SECRET~~ - GDS

INFORMATION

April 5, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: CLINTON E. GRANGER *cl*

SUBJECT: Report on Vietnam

Thanks - B

General Weyand has completed his tour of Vietnam, and his assessment for the President, in draft, is attached. The final report was completed, but General Weyand declined to release it except to the President, although a copy has been delivered to Secretary Schlesinger - and could be available from General Wickham. Little change is anticipated from the draft to the final. The report to the President is objective, and reflects his considered judgment. I agree with his analysis, and assisted in some detail in the preparation of the report.

However, supplementing the formal report, General Weyand will make verbal comments to the President which will amplify some of the more generalized points in his report. He has expressed concern over the political viability of President Thieu, and over capabilities of several of the senior generals in the Vietnamese Army; he will bring these points out to the President.

In addition, he will probably pass on some impressions similar to mine, which follow. The written report, as well as other reports being rendered by Ambassador Martin, reflect the necessity which both feel to seek a positive solution to an almost impossible problem. In my judgment, both General Weyand and Ambassador Martin may feel constrained to maintain the "can-do" American attitude in the face of adversity; my comments provide a more pessimistic balance.

The principal question is whether the GVN can survive in the short term. Without substantial assistance from the United States, I do not think the GVN will survive until the end of April. With a rapid replacement of key weapons by the United States, the situation could be sustained until mid to late May. This is, of course, under the assumption that the North Vietnamese will use their opportunities, and pursue their current military operations while they enjoy a very decided advantage. The intelligence at the time this was drafted - and it is a very fast moving situation - indicates that the NVA is rapidly shifting military assets south to maintain the initiative.

~~TOP SECRET~~ - GDS

In gross terms, the GVN had 13 divisions before the NVA offensive. They now have only 6 divisions, plus fragments that have been withdrawn South from the northern provinces. The six are disposed with three in Military Region (MR) III, on the main approaches to Saigon, and three in MR IV, defending the Delta. Against this the North Vietnamese have 11+ divisions in the northern provinces and as strategic reserve, and an additional eight in the south, for a total of 19. Again in gross terms, the ratio of combat forces is about 3:1 against the South Vietnamese.

The NVA have in excess of 600 Soviet or Chinese-provided tanks; the ARVN have only a little over a hundred left in their entire inventory. The NVA maneuver battalions (armor and infantry) are supported by adequate artillery, and have demonstrated ability to use their forces in conventional warfare in a highly professional manner. They have more than adequate ammunition stocks to support continued offensive action to a final conclusion.

The NVA remain highly disciplined in their operations, in spite of the relatively short training period for some of their replacements. Their command and control is excellent, permitting them to use their forces effectively in offensive operations.

The ARVN divisions in MR III and IV are intact, discipline is reasonably sound, but morale has suffered seriously from the unprecedented disasters in the north. They have been, and remain defensive minded, and with each NVA success their stamina for sustained operations will continue to shrink. Morale has been deteriorating at a rapid rate in the last week.

The NVA are operating as military units, with their families in North Vietnam. In contrast, the ARVN are concerned about the future of their families, and when fighting in areas where the families are located may be expected to place greater emphasis on family responsibility over responsibilities to a Government which may not be able to protect those families. I believe this one factor, more than any other, explains the rout in MR I and II. The NVA have a winner outlook, while the ARVN have a defeatist philosophy.

With this as a general background, I do not think that the ARVN will be able to sustain a defense of the remaining half of South Vietnam - unless the North Vietnamese do not press their advantage, and permit the GVN time to rebuild their army. The probability of this is very low, since intelligence indicates that the NVA are moving to exploit success.

Given time to rebuild their forces, as outlined in General Weyand's report, and with equipment and supplies provided by a supplemental bill for \$722 million in FY 1975, the GVN would probably be able to defend the reduced land areas, especially considering the reduced lines of communication and the advantages of interior lines in a conventional war. This would

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

MINUTES

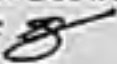
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 9, 1975
Time: 11:25 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.
Place: Cabinet Room, The White House
Subject: Indochina

Principals

The President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General George S. Brown
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll
Assistant Secretary of State Philip Habib
Defense: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
JCS: Chief of Staff, U. S. Army General Fred C. Weyand
WH: Donald Rumsfeld
Robert Hartmann
John Marsh (at end of meeting)
NSC: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft
W. R. Smyser 

XGDS - 3
DECLAS - Date Impossible to Determine.
BYAUTH - Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

DECLASSIFIED - E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
With PORTIONS EXEMPTED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 1.3 (a) (4)

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

NR 92-10 #19 NSC Ltr. 10/7/94

By 109H, NARA Date 2/6/95

a one way street. The speech should also have a tone of admonition to the Chinese, who have supported North Vietnam and the Cambodian Communists. We need a Churchillian speech that would establish a fighting leadership, even if we have to postpone it for a few more days. When the speech was originally scheduled, we thought the situation was more manageable, but the situation has changed to the point where we need this kind of address. As for Vietnam, the situation is now hopeless.

Clements:

I want to endorse what Jim says. I think the time has come to be candid. The people want the President to get out in front and to give us leadership.

The American people do not like what has happened. We should say that Vietnam is bad and has been for twelve years. Americans have been divided. Now let us look ahead and not get into acrimonious debates over the past.

We should not get into recriminations. We have to move forward. You can say that you are the man who will take them forward. We should not promise anything that we cannot do. In my judgment, there is very little we can do. All options are bad. It takes a strong leader to be able to cut your losses. But more important things lie ahead. I agree with the humanitarian side. But we should not get out in front on an idle threat or on some bluff that we cannot support.

Colby:

If I may take advantage of the precedent set by the National Security Advisor, and if I may state my views on policy, it would be that you should put your stress on the Vietnamese people.

In 1954, 900,000 Vietnamese went to South Vietnam from North Vietnam. It will be important to speak of the free choice of the Vietnamese. We should ask Congress to commit money to carry out the

President: The best way for us to proceed would be to have Bill Colby give the intelligence community's judgment. Will you please go ahead, Bill.

Colby: After a week's lull, the Communists have begun a new round of fighting, with Saigon as the ultimate target.

East of Saigon, a North Vietnamese division supported by artillery and armor attacked Xuan Loc, the capital of Long Khanh Province this morning, and heavy fighting is reported inside the town.

Xuan Loc sits astride Route 1, which links Saigon and the coastal provinces.

Fighting also has increased in the delta. The heaviest attacks occurred in the northern delta provinces of Dinh Tuong and Long An.

Elements of the Communist 8th division attacked Tan An, the capital of Long An Province, but have been pushed back.

Schlesinger: They cut Route 4.

Colby: They cut it, but they have been pushed back.

A Communist troop buildup in Kien Tuong Province had raised the possibility that the North Vietnamese were preparing to attack the provincial capital at Moc Hoa. Late reports indicate, however, that these forces have withdrawn, apparently in preparation for attacks closer to Saigon in Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia provinces.

The fighting is likely to intensify further in the near future. new COSVN instructions which call for achieving final victory this year rather than 1976.

pledge to let the Vietnamese, perhaps one to two million, leave, and to provide diplomatic support. Also, the forces could leave. This would give those forces something to fight for.

Americans could respond to their feelings. We would accept the fact that Vietnam has been a defeat, but go on to our concern with the people.

Brown:

I would like to support what Jim Schlesinger says. I have been on a trip, to Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan and other countries. In Pakistan, I was approached on whether we would let the Vietnamese fall. I cited the record.

There is great interest. People wonder if we will turn our backs on Asia. The main question is what we will do about Asia. I think \$722 million, even with Fred Weyand's objectives, would be wasted. We would have no hope. Perhaps \$300 million would maintain some effort on behalf of the Vietnamese and would say we are not turning our back on Asia.

The large sum would also have an impact on the equipment of our own units. We would have to send material that our own forces should use.

Clements:

In any case, we cannot get the material there in time.

President:

Bob, do you have anything you want to add?

Ingersoll:

If you say what Jim suggests, you will have chaos in Saigon.

Schlesinger:

You would not say it publicly. You would say it privately to the Congressional leaders.

Kissinger:

It will certainly get out.

..... Communist gains have far exceeded their expectations for 1975 and have created the "most opportune moment" for total victory this year.

The COSVN instructions call for the Communists to press the attack and expand Communist territorial holdings during April by "liberating" Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, and Binh Duong provinces.

..... when "the time comes" the North Vietnamese will attack Saigon.

..... the Communists are planning a three-pronged assault from the south, west and north on the capital itself.

As the fighting moves closer to Saigon, the likelihood of confusion, public disorder and even panic will increase.

The past week of relative inaction has given the government some chance to consolidate its military position. Nevertheless, in terms of capabilities, the strategic balance decisively favors the Communists.

The North Vietnamese now have 18 infantry divisions in South Vietnam supported by numerous armor, artillery, and air defense units. Eight of these divisions are located in Military Regions 3 and 4.

Moreover, there are strong indications that a North Vietnamese Army corps headquarters and three more reserve divisions are moving to South Vietnam. Two of these divisions have already reached the DMZ and could show up north of Saigon in two to four weeks. In addition, two NVA Air Defense divisions are in South Vietnam, one in MR-3 where it could soon threaten Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut airports.

President:

I am not going to tell the Congressional leaders that sort of thing. I will tell them my decision. We have an executive and legislative branch. I still think we have to make our own decision within the executive branch. We solicit their views, but I have to make the decisions. I do intend to make a strong speech. It will be looked upon as a strong speech.

I believe my speech has to be consistent. I cannot make a strong speech on certain areas of the world, and then, as I look at it, ask for \$300 million. No military estimate can justify it. If we are going to be blunt and say we will do nothing, that is one thing, but we have to use figures that are justifiable. Maybe Congress will not give it to us, but at least, on the record, we have to say what will do it.

Marsh:

Congressman Don Fraser has just made a speech calling for Vietnam aid.

President:

I will ask for \$722 million because we can justify it. At least the record will be clear. I will ask that it be done by a date certain, perhaps May 1, though we still have to decide that.

I will ask for humanitarian aid but not through the United Nations. Third, I will ask for authority, which I think is needed, to evacuate the Americans and others to whom we have an obligation.

I do not rule out at some point letting the North Vietnamese know that any interference with our humanitarian efforts will be met with strong measures. That is why I want flexibility.

It will be a strong speech in my own way, not perhaps in Churchill's. It will not be a phony.

I gather, Jim, that you have reservations. But this is the decision. This will be the only group that knows

By comparison the South Vietnamese, at this moment, now have seven combat-ready infantry divisions. They are rebuilding three from personnel extracted from the north and plan to form two more by early summer.

On paper, the GVN's long-term prospects are bleak, no matter how well Saigon's forces and commanders acquit themselves in the fighting that lies ahead.

This is already beginning to become an accepted judgment within both civilian and military circles in South Vietnam.

At this moment, pressure continues to build among the civilian opposition and among some military commanders for President Thieu either to exert the vigorous leadership which has been conspicuously needed and missing, or step aside.

So far Thieu has shown considerable skill in keeping the opposition divided. He is aided by the fact that there is no single figure who his various political and military critics believe would provide more effective leadership.

While yesterday's bombing of the Presidential palace was an isolated act, it underscores the ever-present possibility of a single incident that would overturn Thieu and bring on political chaos.

Thieu's new nominee for prime minister, Nguyen Ba Can, hopes to have a government formed by this weekend.

Can will try to encourage representatives from the civilian opposition to join the cabinet. There is considerable reluctance, however, especially among important Buddhist and Catholic groups, to be associated with a Thieu government.

it. I have spent a lot of time on this, now and even earlier, going back to 1952. I think our policy, going back to Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, was the right policy. We did not always implement it well, and we may have made many mistakes. But it was the right policy.

But to go to Congress and ask for nothing, that is dubious. It is our best hope, if we can get it.

Thank you very much, gentlemen.

In any case, we see no dramatic improvement likely to stem from this new government.

Another factor is U.S. aid. A prompt and large-scale infusion would tend to restore confidence. The converse is obviously also true.

The most likely outcome is a government willing to accept a settlement on Communist terms, i. e., surrender.

The Communists are repeating their willingness to negotiate with a post-Thieu government, in an obvious effort to encourage a political upheaval in Saigon.

At the same time, Hanoi is making it clear that it is not interested in a compromise but rather in a figleaf for a North Vietnamese takeover under military pressure.

In this regard, the new COSVN instructions mentioned state that negotiations or a tripartite government are merely stratagems to isolate the GVN.

We have few indications yet on how the Communists are setting up their new administration in the northern half of South Vietnam.

In at least some instances they seem to be maintaining the facade of a transitional national liberation government.

We believe, however, that there has been a basic downgrading of the Viet Cong's PRG in North Vietnamese thinking. Hanoi now sees no need for a lengthy intermediate stage of negotiation and coalition rule, and has little incentive to maintain the PRG as a separate political entity.

In sum, we believe Hanoi will take whatever action is necessary to force the war to an early conclusion -- probably by early summer. The remaining questions

have to do with Communist tactics and timing, and whether or not a political solution on Communist terms can be arranged prior to a final South Vietnamese military collapse.

Finally, Mr. President, there is the question of how these recent events may effect the attitudes of other nations toward us.

In general, the current debacle is seen not as a turning point, but as the final step on a particular path that most governments had long seen coming. They have, in short, seen the whole Indochina experience as a major setback for the U. S.

Many, especially in Europe, had long questioned America's judgment and the propriety of its involvement.

Others were disillusioned with America's ability to cope with an uncommonly complex situation.

Still others gradually lost faith in America's will to stay on a difficult course.

The circumstances of the Vietnamese collapse have dramatized these perceptions, but adjustments were already being made.

There will, however, be apprehension over the repercussions, and the American reaction to the dramatic finale.

Our allies have been disturbed, and our adversaries heartened, over trends in American attitudes toward:

- limiting the flexibility of U. S. foreign policy in meeting new challenges,
- reducing U. S. support for our allies and friends, and
- reducing the share of U. S. resources devoted to maintaining our military power and foreign policy.

Any signs that the American people are beginning a prolonged and bitter internal debate will heighten these concerns and intensify fear that we may be heading into a new era of isolationism. U.S. actions in the Middle East, in particular, will be closely watched in judging our future course.

Levels of trust, however, will be affected mainly by perceptions of U.S. behavior on issues of direct and compelling interest to the countries concerned.

Western Europeans and Japan, for example, do not expect a reduction of U.S. power relevant to their immediate concerns. And none of them consider U.S. aid to their security any less necessary than before.

A number of regional powers, such as Iran and Brazil, will continue their trend toward self-reliance rather than linkage with the U.S. in anything but major confrontations with the USSR.

Among those on the firing line, uneasiness will increase, and the drive toward self-reliance will accelerate.

The South Koreans and Nationalist Chinese will see greater parallels to their own situation, and will put pressure for maximum support as long as possible.

Southeast Asians, especially the Thai, will feel more exposed, but have long anticipated eventual U.S. withdrawal from the mainland. They may now advance their adjustment to growing Communist power.

Middle East countries will see U.S. interests there as compelling continuing involvement. However, there is one particular situation on which Vietnam developments could have a direct impact. Both

Prime Minister Rabin and President Sadat have been very reluctant to place their respective nations' vital interests hostage to any agreement which was not self-enforcing, especially any agreement that was silent on matters which either regarded as being of major concern. The experience with the 1973 Paris Agreement could reinforce this already manifest reluctance.

Soviet, Chinese, and other Communist leaders, for their part, will not automatically conclude that other U.S. commitments are placed in question, unless:

The U.S. public reaction points to a repudiation of other foreign involvement, or

Internal U.S. recriminations are so divisive as to raise doubts of the U.S. ability to develop any consensus on foreign policy in the near future.

North Vietnamese leaders will exploit their victories to denigrate U.S. power, especially among third-world countries.

Hanoi may increase its support to Thailand's insurgency.

Its principal energies, however, at least for the next year or two, will be devoted to consolidating its control over Indochina.

Do you wish me to go on to Cambodia now or later?

President:

Please go ahead now.

Colby:

In Cambodia, it is difficult to see the government holding on for much more than another week.

Communist attacks in the Phnom Penh area have weakened government defenses north and west of the capital to the degree that they could collapse at any time.

..... the Communists are calling in even more units from the countryside for an all-out attack against the capital's defenders.

The Communists are also placing additional artillery near the capital.

The insurgents will soon have their forces ready to begin the final push.

Meanwhile, the time is rapidly approaching when ammunition shortages will directly affect Cambodian Army capabilities.

By April 17 all ammunition earmarked for Cambodia will have been delivered. In-country stocks of some types of ammunition will be exhausted soon thereafter and all ammunition will be gone by April 25.

In the face of the steady battlefield pressure and uncertainty over U. S. assistance, morale in the army is plummeting.

The army high command is nearly paralyzed and is issuing only limited guidance to units in the field.

A number of key unit commanders in the Phnom Penh area have expressed the belief that the end is near and the fight may soon go out of the army completely.

..... government troops in at least one isolated enclave have contacted local Communist forces to discuss the possibility of surrender.

On the political front, most Cambodians now realize that President Lon Nol's departure has had little effect on the prospects for meaningful negotiations with the other side.

Prime Minister Long Boret returned to Phnom Penh yesterday saying that there were no prospects for a compromise solution or a cease-fire.

Boret met with Sihanouk's son, Prince Yuvaneath, in Bangkok. Yuvaneath admitted that he was not authorized to speak for his father but his claim that Sihanouk would not negotiate is undoubtedly correct.

The government may soon invite Sihanouk to return and try to tie the invitation to an agreement that Communist forces not enter Phnom Penh or hinder the flow of relief supplies to the city.

At this point, this sort of an orderly surrender is the best that can be hoped for.

President: Thank you, Bill. Are there any questions?

Schlesinger:an attack on Phnom Penh may occur on Friday. We do not have much time.

President: Fred, will you give us the benefit of your report?

General Wevand: In preparing this report, I went back and referred to the report I did on a trip I took in July, 1973, about two years ago. In that report, I said that the position of the North Vietnamese and of the PRG had been dramatically improved since the start of the cease-fire. They were shipping major quantities of supplies to their forces.

On the other side, the leaders of the South Vietnamese army were aware that they were now engaged in a political struggle. General Truong's civic actions in MR-1 were especially impressive. The political struggle was engaged, and the GVN was determined to win it.

I found this interesting in the light of recent developments. The South Vietnamese continued the concept that this was a political struggle and they organized their forces to this effect.

I said then that the top South Vietnamese leaders thought the question was not if the Communists would attack but when. Those leaders were very sensitive to American support and they were counting on the intervention of U.S. air power in the case of such a Communist attack.

They are still in this mood. They clearly still cherish the hope that the U.S. will help them. There are many reasons why they responded as they did; that is one of them.

I found the situation critical. It is clearly going in favor of the other side. Hanoi has many options; the GVN and the U.S. have few.

The South Vietnamese have suffered heavy losses. Their morale was very low when we got there, but it has been improving since then. I believe your decision to send a team, whatever may be said about its composition, is clearly vindicated.

I believe the South Vietnamese are on the brink of total military defeat. I examined a plan that is intended to deal with the area that they now hold. They have been thinking of this for some time, once they saw that American support was dwindling and would continue to dwindle whereas North Vietnamese support would grow.

They have been rationing arms and ammunitions for some time. They have been trying to husband their resources. They have cut down the use of rifle ammunition and of grenades very dramatically.

They had made plans to complete their resources in an area which corresponds roughly to what they now have, though they had hoped to hold more of the coast, especially to the extent to which they had some expectation of finding oil. The Delta, of course, is their rice bowl and very valuable. The rest of the area, south of the present line, contains lumber and a lot of population.

I told Thieu this plan was sound but a linear defense was not appropriate to the type of situation that they face. They should find enemy divisions and destroy them wherever they are, and not just try to hold the line that it is not identifiable by some geographic feature. The big question is whether they now have time to get organized.

The issues they face are as follows:

First, to reconstitute their forces and to create four more divisions in order to defend against the larger North Vietnamese army.

Second, to upgrade their territorial forces to 27 regiments (which would have been done a long time ago if they had thought that they would face this kind of military challenge).

Third, to upgrade their ranger groups.

If they could do all that, they would be in pretty good shape. There is a limit to what the North Vietnamese can send down. The South Vietnamese could mass, and with the very strong air support that they have they could do a good job for a time.

We all agree that the long-range prospects are just impossible for them. The issue is: can we get the stuff to them in time and will the enemy give them time?

I have not tried to be too optimistic. However, there have been reports from some of the places where I testified that I said the GVN could win. They can, locally, but I do not believe they can push the North Vietnamese army back.

I have said that the South Vietnamese could and would fight. I have said this in part in order to help keep the South Vietnamese together. But their leadership is very doubtful. I have talked to Thieu. If he does what he says, it can go pretty well. As for the will to fight, I have said that in March, 1972, there were 16 North Vietnamese divisions down there. And they were defeated, though with American help. General Vogt and I concluded that they had the will to fight. But they had our support.

Last year they had 600 people a week killed and many wounded. So I think they have the will to fight. I do not think one should regard this panic as a sign that they have no such will. I have seen such panic in Korea in 1950 as well as in Burma. It is not pleasant, but it is not unprecedented. The 18th and the 25th divisions have been doing well. The question is the will of the people to resist or to accept a form of government that they consider alien.

The other question is the support of the American people. I assume they would support more assistance, having stuck with it this long. That is the way I dealt with it in my report. I have found support on our determination not to let force prevail over the will of the people.

I have recently seen some talk about secret commitments. In a visit last year to Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, I spoke of continuing American support. It is clear that they all expected American support, although Thieu was worried about threats in the Congress. Thieu clearly believes you have done all you could. He understands the Congress.

One thing that I had in the back of my mind as I wrote my recommendations was that we owe it to them to help them or at least we should not deny them the help if they need it. If I did not believe it, I would not be here. Neither, I guess, would the rest of you.

The question is whether the American people would accept the burden. As I have watched the orphan program and the refugee movement, I have concluded that the American people desperately want to help the South Vietnamese. Whether this sentiment translates into military

assistance it is hard to say, but I believe it exists.

The price that I think it requires is \$722 million which would build four more divisions and upgrade other units. This amount subsumes the \$300 million that is now in the supplemental.

I also had recommendations on refugee assistance and on evacuation policy. You are aware of these.

President:

Thank you, Fred. I read your report and I talked to you about it in California. I am impressed with its solid factual analysis.

Henry, may I have the options as you see them?

Secretary Kissinger:

If I may wear my hat as Secretary of State for a time, I want to take issue with the estimate of the Director of Central Intelligence regarding the impact on our worldwide position of a collapse in Vietnam. It was his judgment that the world reaction would be negligible, based on the fact that everybody had been anticipating what would happen.

Let me say that, whatever their long run expectations, no country expected so rapid a collapse. I believe their reaction would also be affected if they did not even see an effort made.

We have reports that the Japanese, the Indonesians, and other Asian nations are watching closely, and they are forming judgments. It is not in their interests to say this publicly.

Especially in Asia, this rapid collapse and our impotent reaction will not go unnoticed. I believe that we will see the consequences although they may not come quickly or in any predictable manner.

So I cannot share the judgment expressed by the Director of Central Intelligence. I believe that, even in Western Europe, this will have a fall-out.

Let me now come to the options.

On military assistance, the first option would be to ask for no military aid but to follow the predominant mood in the Congress and do nothing. You could say that your predecessors have put in \$150 billion and that it has not worked, and that no amount foreseeable is going to work. You could say that you are concentrating on the economic and humanitarian side. You would have the advantage that you could be the first President since 1947 who will have had nothing to do with Vietnam.

President:

Not as President perhaps, but as a member of Congress I have.

Secretary Kissinger:

The negative aspect of such an option is that it would trigger an immediate collapse in Saigon and that this collapse would be caused by the United States.

It would give Saigon the least opportunity to negotiate. It would imperil 6,000 Americans, and it would make it impossible to evacuate any Vietnamese. The international implications would compound those that I have described. But, it would provoke the least dissension in this country.

Between that and the \$722 million that Fred has mentioned, you can about pick your own figure.

You can go for \$300 million saying that this is all that is immediately available. You can say that you will either try to get some more later, or you can say that you will specifically try for the \$422 million later.

President: This would be easiest to get but, as Fred told me in California, it could not be justified in terms of additional forces.

Secretary Kissinger: That is correct. The \$300 million is designed to bring supply stocks up to the 60-day level.

Schlesinger: You should know that Mahan is marking up the \$300 million tomorrow. I told him he may want to wait until after the speech. You may want to send him a signal.

Secretary Kissinger: The problem with \$300 million is that it will be hard to defend. It is important to get the debate behind us and not to go on for months. So a case can be made that you either go for close to nothing or that you go for Fred's recommendation, since \$300 million is not enough.

If you say \$300 million and more later, you are simply bringing about months of Vietnam debate. But you could do it that way. It is possible that South Vietnam may collapse, and then you may not need to ask for the \$22 million. It is, of course, also probable that if you go for \$722 million, there will still be a collapse.

The advantages of the \$722 million are: First, that it's militarily defensible; second, that it would strengthen the South Vietnamese position for inevitable negotiations -- as Fred says, South Vietnam can then negotiate with North Vietnam; and, third, that it would put us in the best position to negotiate our extraction, with South Vietnam, North Vietnam, or both.

So I see three viable options:

- First, to ask for nothing or next to nothing;
- Second, to ask for \$300 million and indicate that there might be more to come;

-- Third, to ask for the whole amount.

Next, we must deal with the options regarding economic assistance.

President: If we ask for \$722 million, can we say that this is all we ask?

Weyand: We think that the amount for 1976 that we have requested, which is \$1.3 billion, would be enough to carry us from there on.

President: Then, if the \$722 million is granted, and if it is effective, we would expect that about \$1.3 billion would do it.

Secretary Kissinger: As I understand it, the \$722 million would have to be followed by \$1.3 billion in order to have a chance for success.

There is also the question of economic assistance. It is also related to the military option. AID wants to stay within the limit of its original authorization, so they do not want to ask for more than \$167 million. This was our appraisal as being what we needed before the attack, but it would appear unbalanced in comparison to the great increase in our request for military aid.

President: Does this figure include economic and humanitarian aid?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes.

Our Embassy has asked for \$450 million which has a lot of money for economic development that makes very little sense right now.

I am inclined to think that anything between \$170 million and \$450 million might make sense. We can say that anything around \$250 million or in that area would make sense, but there is no hard basis for any of these figures.

There is a hard basis for the Embassy figure, but we cannot defend it on the Hill under present circumstances.

Since we are talking of emergency assistance, it should be more than in the past. Certainly, anything between \$170 million and \$300 million can be put to use.

We need also to determine our stance on a Congressional resolution that some of our aid should go to support people living in Communist areas.

We have several options: We can oppose, we can be neutral, or we can be favorable toward such a resolution.

The major problem is that we would be supporting the rear area of a country that is attacking an ally. A case can be made for the argument that they have the Soviet Union and China to help them.

As Secretary of State, I think that this kind of idea presents an image of a sappy America getting creamed and at the same time helping those who are attacking it.

Schlesinger: What is your opinion as National Security Advisor?

Secretary Kissinger: As National Security Advisor, I have to be impartial, but that is a hard one. I will risk the recommendation that we should oppose such legislation.

President: I gather that Senator Kennedy tends to advocate it, wanting to administer the funds through the United Nations.

Secretary Kissinger: It amounts to the same thing: it relieves Communist resources and personnel. If the U.N. wants to do it without U.S. participation, that is its business. But for the United States to do this, while a war is going on, would be hard to explain to the American people and to foreign countries.

President: Have all the refugees come to the South Vietnamese area, or are they still in areas controlled by the North Vietnamese?

Colby: Some have come to the South Vietnamese area, but many are still in the North Vietnamese area.

Weyand: We are now talking of a refugee figure of about 400,000 in areas under South Vietnamese control as opposed to 1 million earlier.

President: Do we still hold Cam Ranh?

Colby: No.

Secretary Kissinger: It is a terrible tragedy. Nobody can deny the ineptitude of the South Vietnamese. But for the United States to send relief to Communist areas and to help them devote resources to the war seems very questionable.

President: In effect, we would be financing both sides.

Kissinger:

You have these three choices. You can oppose the proposal for providing aid to refugees in Communist areas, or you can give the Congress the facts and let them decide, or you can support it. It is not a disgraceful argument.

With regard to evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese, there are three things that affect a decision. First, the number of people who might need to be evacuated; second, the political conditions under which they might need to be evacuated; third, the question of how to organize such an effort.

I have a list of potential evacuees. The maximum total of those included in this list is 1,700,000. They fall into eight different categories:

1. American citizens and their relatives;
2. The diplomatic corps;
3. The ICCS;
4. Third country nationals under contract to us;
5. The employees of the United States and their dependents. This latter category is estimated at about 164,000 people.

The total included in those five categories comes close to 200,000.

President:

Of which, I understand, 6,000 are Americans.

Kissinger:

There are about 5,400 and 500 dependents.

We would then have the other categories.

6. The Vietnamese relatives of American citizens.
7. Senior GVN and military officials and their dependents.

The total for this category is given as 600,000, which seems high.

8. Former Vietnamese employees of the United States intelligence and other agencies as well as their dependents.

One problem is that, even if you accept the level of 200,000 on the list, Graham Martin refuses to carry out the order to evacuate them.

Clements: Why don't you fire him?

Kissinger: Graham Martin's major problem is that he does not want to trigger panic by beginning any evacuation process.

Schlesinger: Conditions will get worse.

Kissinger: Once we get a Presidential decision, I shall see to it that Graham Martin carries it out. But we have not had a clear-cut decision.

It depends a great deal on what the President recommends for aid to South Vietnam. If the President recommends nothing, then panic could create an immediate problem. If the President recommends support and asks for money, we can then tell Thieu that we are going to have to take out some Americans and it should not create the same result.

As for the Vietnamese, there are some problems. For one thing, they are scattered all over the place. We would have to get them to the aircraft. If we gave the order to evacuate, it might well be impossible to carry it out.

Schlesinger: We have to have the cooperation and the acquiescence of the Vietnamese.

Kissinger: This is the next point: We have to decide how to organize such an effort. This will require immediate

consultation with Thieu, once we decide, or with whatever successor government there might be. But, whoever is in power in Saigon, we will need to coordinate. Your speech will have some effect on this.

We have looked, with the Department of Defense, at all available assets. It is clear that, with the numbers involved, this cannot be a one day operation like Eagle Pull in Cambodia.

By commercial aircraft, we could take out 600 a day. By military aircraft, we could take out 15,000 in a day. By ship, we could take out anywhere from 26,000 to 125,000 a day. Of course, ships have a longer turn around time of four to five days. So you have an evacuation that will take a week if you go to 240,000.

Schlesinger:

It also depends on the cooperation of the North Vietnamese. They have anti-aircraft weapons. If those weapons are brought near Tan Son Nhut, they can make it very difficult.

Kissinger:

So the issue depends first on your decisions, second on identifying the persons to evacuate, third on the cooperation of the GVN, and fourth on the cooperation of the North Vietnamese. I should add that this is one area where I believe the Soviet Union and the Chinese could be helpful.

In your decision you would have to deal with evacuation, with what to say to the GVN, with what you want the Department of Defense to do, and with what diplomatic efforts you would want the State Department to make vis-a-vis these countries and others. I agree with the Secretary of Defense that it will be hairy.

President:

To put into effect an evacuation proposal for our own people and for 200,000 others, would that not require violation of the law or the agreement of Congress if we need to use force.

Kissinger: My own personal view is that you would have to ask Congressional authority to take forces in. It is not like Cambodia. It will last longer. Even if we have the consent of the GVN, we will have to fight Vietnamese. If that is your decision, this will require U.S. forces.

First we have to decide what to go for. Then we can talk to Thieu. Then we can get the Embassy to thin out our personnel, removing those who were assigned to I Corps and II Corps as well as dependents and the like.

President: Do you have any observations on this, Jim?

Schlesinger: You have the innate power to protect Americans. I think the Foreign Relations Committee is anxious to cooperate and would not object to our use of force. Moose and Meissner, who have been out there, have been cabling back favorable recommendations on this issue.

Kissinger: The problem is not under the War Powers Act, as I see it. It is under the Indochina Restrictions, where the issue becomes more difficult. Elsewhere, it would appear to be easy to use U.S. forces for this purpose.

President: Which of these was approved last?

Kissinger: We went through that at the time of this legislation and determined that the War Powers legislation superseded the other. But the Administration of your predecessor took the position at the time that it would not claim this.

However, despite this kind of issue, the question is whether it would be politically acceptable for us to do this. I question whether we should rely on Moose or Meissner.

President: It is great for people to say this, as they have in Turkey and Greece, to the effect that we can go ahead. But, of course, if it does not work it is we who are in trouble.

Schlesinger: On Turkey, the General Accounting Office says that it is all right.

President: If Congress wants us to do it, let them pass a Sense of the Congress Resolution.

Kissinger: Another problem is that in Vietnam it is not just a matter of evacuating American citizens but also of evacuating Vietnamese.

Clements: If we go to the Congress, we should have one package and go for it.

President: I think we should ask for a change in the law that we can use certain resources that we need for evacuation. Somebody should be preparing it so that we can send it up by Friday. We should not just be limited to one division, or one other type of unit, or just to our personnel.

If we have a disaster, Congress will evade the responsibility. Let us get some language. I am sick and tired of their asking us to ignore the law or to enforce it, depending on whether or not it is to their advantage.

Brown: When this legislation came up, Admiral Moorer spoke specifically of this problem. He was told that the U. S. of course had the power to protect Americans.

President: Let's get that testimony.

Does anybody wish to comment on the general issues?

Schlesinger: I think we have a number of problems. The first one is Vietnam itself. We must recognize that it is gone. It is going now and it will go quickly depending on the North Vietnamese. With any aid we give them

we are buying time, partly to get out the Americans.

We must try to see what it will look like in 90 days. It is desirable to avoid fragmentation of the people and an argument with Congress. We must state clearly in closed rooms that hope is slim, and that we are moving on a strategy of 60 days to 6 months. We should say that we are doing this to save the Americans and to protect the Vietnamese.

I think in your speech you should push for \$300 million and say that we will ask for more later. We will use the time to get the Americans out. Fred says we just have a chance and that it depends on the North Vietnamese. So far, the South Vietnamese have not been able even to regroup the unruly people of the Second division. We may be faced with a situation that will last only 30 days.

The important thing is for you to establish leadership and to give a call to the people. You could talk along the lines of Churchill's blood, sweat and tears. You could say that U.S. foreign policy is in the most difficult period since 1939. I would tick off Portugal and say that we insist on a free election. We should tell the Europeans we expect them to do more in their own defense. Also, we should speak of Turkey and of what must be done there.

I think that if you have a fighting speech, you will have a positive impact on the Congress. I think there are two kinds of people on the Hill: Those who want to get out of Vietnam and those who are just waiting for an inspirational message.

Let us not talk of detente or of past achievements. I am concerned for the country and for you. We need to challenge the Soviet Union. We should say that detente is not consistent with revolutionary actions in Portugal and with what they have been doing in Southeast Asia. We want to preserve detente but it cannot be

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/GDS~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and
Assistant to the President for National Security
Affairs
Dr. James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense
Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy
Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Monday, April 14, 1975
3:30 p.m.

PLACE: The White House
Washington, D. C.

President: I would hope we could consider this an executive session so we could have this a free and open session.

Sparkman: We just came from one.

President: We put a great deal of time and effort into the speech. There was unanimity in the Administration with what I said and the policies I recommended. I was therefore able to speak with conviction about where we should go.

Sparkman: I thought the first 30 minutes of your speech, which covered the world -- I don't know who wrote it but it was the best word structure I have seen and a great delivery.

I would like to hear from the two Secretaries.

President: Henry,

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE/GDS~~DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 34MR 91-16, #12 NSC 64, 3/24/92
By KSE 9/25/92

Kissinger: Perhaps I should talk about the political situation and Jim will discuss the military situation and the figures we are requesting.

It is clear the military situation in South Vietnam is extremely difficult. North Vietnam has the military superiority. They have occupied much of the territory. It is caused in our view by too little assistance and incompetent management of the retreat. But whatever the reason, we are trying to bring about a political situation and a negotiation which would exploit the new balance of forces. We have thought that the U.S. should not be a principal agent in these negotiations but should rely on the South Vietnamese or others such as France. We are prepared to support negotiating efforts and the elements that are prepared to negotiate. This is a process which will take a few weeks to sort out in Saigon.

With respect to the legal situation on evacuation. We want to reduce the number of American citizens as soon as possible but not so fast as to precipitate a panic. The Embassy has resisted evacuation, but we have ordered it to get down to about 1,250. I would appreciate no mention of it.

President: We had a similar problem in Cambodia. We started with over 400 and had reduced it to about 75 when the time for evacuation came. We were prepared for 600 Americans and 300 Cambodians. We had few, because the gutsy Cambodians chose to stay and die rather than leave. So we got it down in an orderly manner to a manageable figure.

Kissinger: We offered the Cabinet members in Phnom Penh a chance to leave and without exception they stayed even though they were on the assassination list.

The total list of the people endangered in Vietnam is over a million. The irreducible list is 174,000. This doesn't mean we could get them out; it would be just those in overwhelming jeopardy. We would have to assemble them where we could get to them and have conditions where we could move them.

There are two Acts of Congress: the War Powers Act and the Indochina proscription. We think under the War Powers Act the President has authority with respect to evacuating American citizens; with the Indochina Act we would appreciate clarification. We think there is no authority for evacuation of Vietnamese.



Schlesinger: Henry has touched the high points. There has been some improvement in the past few days. They have been fighting well in Xuan Loc and the Delta but whether it is temporary depends on North Vietnam and President's request. In the military area the North Vietnamese have eight divisions and the GVN seven. They are doing well but they are dipping into stocks of ammunition. Generally speaking, if the North Vietnamese bring up their forces they will have preponderance, but the South Vietnamese know the terrain and have their backs to the wall.

We have requested \$722 million which reflects the results of the Weyand mission. The difference reflects the hope on the GVN side to equip four infantry divisions. That is \$140 million. To convert the four ranger groups is \$120 million. For general munitions, \$190 million. If you would like more detailed data, General Weyand is here.

President: Let's see what the Committee wishes. The \$722 million is designed to meet the current situation and is totally different from the \$300 million. Fred's report reflects a different situation.

Case: You are very good to see us, especially on such short notice. The reason for the meeting is that the Moose Mission just came back and briefed us. We have a consensus on the immediate actions: There should be urgent action to reduce American personnel to the point where they could be lifted out in one lift. We feel there is grave danger if this reduction is not being done in a timely manner. We fear the people on the ground would panic so we are not moving rapidly. We would go to them frankly and say this is how we would do it. Stew suggests a sea evacuation.

Kissinger: We waited to press him until the President's speech so it would not be in the context of pulling the plug. We now have a cable saying it is underway.

President: Not to be critical, Stew, but 4,000 on one ship would pull the plug. We could have taken over 600. I don't know how many more could be handled.

Percy: Couldn't we give orders for every plane outgoing to be full?

Javita: There are orders and orders. We think you should be sure through someone other than Martin that your orders are being carried out. Within any context of aid, the first priority must be to get Americans and deserving South Vietnamese out. It is your problem, but we think you should be sure that your orders should be carried out.



President: I assure you my orders will be carried out. This is a two-way street. We will do our part but we think we have a good schedule and program and want your cooperation. I think we have an obligation to do whatever we can for the people to whom we are obligated.

Baker: We felt an evacuation of the American citizens was so urgent that everything else -- legality, Thieu's incumbency, everything else -- was secondary to that. We appreciate your forthcoming attitude toward this problem in your speech. We wanted to tell you our concerns and hear from you your concerns. We hope when we have, we will have established a new era of negotiation between the Executive and Legislative branches. We will talk with you on the amounts, which should be designed to facilitate the evacuation of Americans.

Sparkman: How is the report?

President: I have read it. I don't agree with all of it but it is a forthright report.

Sparkman: The Cambodian evacuation went well because of planning. We hope there is some planning going on in Saigon.

Schlesinger: The situations are not parallel. The Viet Cong infrastructure, the congestion, the high potential levels of violence -- it could be complicated.

Case: We appreciate this. That is why we are concerned.

Percy: Could we get clarification on the 1,200 -- when they will be there and could they be pulled in one lift?

Kissinger: I don't have that today. I will have it tomorrow and I will let you know. On Thursday, the Ambassador was told to take it down as soon as possible, and to tell Thieu immediately.

Percy: Is 1,200 the immediate minimum? It sounds like a vast number. The reason it was easy in Cambodia is that we put a ceiling on.

President: If there isn't some indication of aid, the situation could disintegrate rapidly.

Javits: I will give you large sums for evacuation, but not one nickel for military aid for Thieu.



Church: I would think that if money is required to facilitate getting the Americans out, that can be worked out. What has not been worked out is the Vietnamese evacuees. Secretary Kissinger has said maybe there are 175,000. Clearly there is no legal inhibition to bringing some out along with Americans, but 175,000, with American troops involved, could involve us in a very large war. This raises the specter of a new war, thousands of American troops holding on in an enclave for a long period.

President: It is not envisaged that this would be for a long period but as quickly and precisely as possible.

Biden: What concerns us is that a week ago Habib told us we would be formulating a plan. A week has gone by and nothing has happened. We should focus on getting them out. Getting the Vietnamese out and military aid for the GVN are totally different.

Kissinger: The plan for American evacuation is in pretty good shape. But we had a report that if we pulled out and left them in the lurch, we may have to fight the South Vietnamese. It was that we were concerned with and that is why we waited to go to Thieu so we didn't do it in the context of a bug out. The second problem is getting American citizens out in an emergency. Third is the Vietnamese to whom we have an obligation. This is infinitely more complicated and large-scale. It requires cooperation from the GVN and maybe the North Vietnamese.

Biden: I feel put upon in being presented an all or nothing number. I don't want to have to vote to buy it all or not at all. I am not sure I can vote for an amount to put American troops in for one to six months to get the Vietnamese out. I will vote for any amount for getting the Americans out. I don't want it mixed with getting the Vietnamese out.

President: There are three operations that are intertwined. There is getting out 4,500, the last 1,800 and the Vietnamese. The worst way to do it is to label it evacuation aid.

Syrnington: I am very familiar with Vietnam. In 1967 I decided it was hopeless. My people are asking if we are asking if we are holding Americans hostage for more aid. We know that is not so, but what worries me is the feeling we have been wrong so many times. We are all surprised at the collapse of South Vietnam. Why did we leave the 6,000 there so far? Where are the 175,000 going? Who is going to take them? These could all be dealt with if we could get the Americans out.

Pell: We could put these people in Borneo. It has the same latitude, the same climate, and would welcome some anti-Communists.



President: Let me comment on where they would go: We opened our door to the Hungarians. I am not saying the situation is identical but our tradition is to welcome the oppressed. I don't think these people should be treated any differently from any other people -- the Hungarians, Cubans, Jews from the Soviet Union.

Clark: Is the request for military assistance primarily to arrest the situation and bring on negotiations, or for something else?

President: I think I stated it clearly: We wanted the sum to stabilize the military situation in order to give a chance for negotiations and to permit evacuation of Americans and deserving Vietnamese.

Sparkman: Do we have any obligations under the Paris Accords?

President: We signed with the understanding we could uphold it. The means were taken from us.

Sparkman: But our obligations....

Kissinger: The Accords had not obligations but authorities, that is, Article 7. President Nixon and others judged that permitting the United States to extricate itself would permit the United States to provide aid and enforce the agreements. Under the Paris Accords we have no obligation. To the CVN we said that if they let us get our forces out it would enhance our chances of getting aid for them and enforcing the agreement. It was in this context, not that of a legal obligation. We never claimed an obligation; we never pleaded an obligation. But some of us think there is a moral obligation.

Mansfield: My position is well known and I won't change. The caucus was concerned about the pace of the evacuation. Also that the witnesses should be the highest members of your Administration. We are trying to comply with your request as soon as possible. If Hugh [Scott] agrees, we will not meet Tuesday and Wednesday so we can process these requests rapidly. There was concern about humanitarian aid and the desire to send it through non-governmental agencies and the UN.

Scott: I agree to the proposal. One thing we haven't discussed is the amounts. I think we need to discuss a figure.

Biden: I don't want to commit myself to any precise number. How much money depends on how many we try to get out.



Kissinger: This is a matter of extreme delicacy. We can't take them under crisis conditions. No one is thinking of a long period of time to get people out. We are thinking of ten days to two weeks.

Church: I think we should establish an emergency fund to allow you to deal with the situation and carefully draw the language about troops so as to insure there are limits.

President: We are not wanting to put American troops in but we have to have enough funds to make it look like we plan to hold for some period.

Glenn: The idea here is very different from what I envisioned. I and most Senators thought of a surgical extraction, not of a ten-day to two-week operation with a bridgehead. This is a re-entry of a magnitude we have not envisioned.

I think we have to keep this very quiet. I thought it was a one-shot airlift.

Cage: This was essential to have been said. The only way we could do an operation of this kind is through negotiations between the North and South.

Glenn: I can see North Vietnam deciding not to let us get these people out and attacking our bridgehead. Then we would have to send forces to protect our security force. That fills me with fear.

Javits: Tell the press we are thinking of \$200 million.

President: If this is a meeting to plan an evacuation, this will panic the QVN totally.

[The meeting ended]



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20535

W. A. SUTHERLAND

11/24/44 - 11/24/44 4/20/46

By but NARA Date 5/20/96

PLACE: The Oval Office

Kissinger: We could give him Australia. Brad Morse wants to replace Peterson at UNDP. If we put Buffett into the Morse job, it would really be an advantage.

At ASNE, I think what you said yesterday would be good. No one wants to hear it here, but it is right; the world wants to hear it and it is good politics. These guys who are getting us out of Vietnam aren't going to rest -- they won't rest until they have dismantled us. The only thing I would add is something on the Middle East. I will prepare a paper for you of all the Middle East options so you can study it. You can't discuss them in the NSC, but with Nelson [Rockefeller] and Don [Rumsfeld] -- not Schlesinger.

President: We could do it when Nelson returns.

Kissinger: Or when I get back from Los Angeles.

I think you should totally oppose the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5(b)(2)
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President: No question we won't endorse it. We can reiterate our previous request and say anything less is more harmful, or just let the Congress work its will. It will be even more circumscribed on the floor.

Kissinger: My experience on Vietnam is when we compromised we usually lost. We usually held tough until the last minute. The record shouldn't show we collaborated.

President: I think what we asked for makes sense. I don't think they will pass anything, so we ought to do what is right.

Kissinger: If they pass it and it doesn't collapse, you will have the same problem with the '76 appropriation. There is no longer any chance for Vietnam in the Congress.

President: I agree. It won't do any good. It would signal the worst aspect of it. We will signal we want what we ask for and let it go at that.

Kissinger: On my ASNE speech, I am summing up on Vietnam and your speech.

President: I looked at the tape of my speech. I think it was pretty good.

Kissinger: It was great. And the people will get behind you. It is what they want to hear.

[Similarity with Europe in the 30's.]

Reston says you should go to the Soviet Union and China. They can't get us anything more than marginally better than without, and why be indebted to the Soviet Union for so little?

President: What is the scenario if we don't get it? We have got to be realistic. We won't get the money. What will it do?

Kissinger: A collapse within two months. Maybe within days.

Can we issue an order to shut up about a move?

President: Absolutely.

Kissinger: CIA and DOD are leaking that it is being help up.

President: I will say something in the Cabinet meeting.

Kissinger: I talked to Mike and asked him to talk to you if he decides we don't have the vote. Then we can talk turkey to Thieu.

If we had the \$722 million, we could have gotten a negotiation. We have no chips left. If I could tell Le Duc Tho we would reenter if they didn't calm down, he might stare us down, but I think he would cave.

If they turn us down, my instinct is to do it honestly, send Martin in and say we would like to save as many South Vietnamese as possible.

President: What will Thieu's reaction be?

Kissinger: Unpredictable. People may start killing Americans to ingratiate themselves with the Communists. Whole divisions may switch.

One other thing on my speech. I sum up your approach, say we can't avoid a setback by denying its existence. Then I say we have a strong design of foreign policy -- but I can't do it without going back to the Nixon years. I don't want to go back without your knowing about it.

President: I was a strong supporter of the foreign policy. Let me look at it, but that is factual.

Kissinger: Then I say we have to pull ourselves together. But I want to be very careful about it.

The preparatory conference of consumers and producers blew up.

President: The news stories weren't bad. It looked like we were right and stood up to them.

Kissinger: I am instructing the Embassies to take firm positions on two things: I have to slap Callaghan on the wrist for Vietnam -- he was a little too snide.

~~SECRET/NODIS/XGDS~~

- 4 -

On the Middle East, I will have that memo by the weekend.

President: Can you call Scali? Why don't you offer him Austrakia?

Kissinger: Italy is out of the question.

~~SECRET/NODIS/XGDS~~

4/24/75
2745X

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/XGDS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

PARTICIPANTS:

President Ford
Vice President Rockefeller
Secretary of State Kissinger
Secretary of Defense Schlesinger
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff,
General George S. Brown
Director of Central Intelligence,
William Colby
Deputy Secretary of State,
Robert Ingersoll
Deputy Secretary of Defense,
William Clements
Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft,
Deputy Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME:

Thursday, April 24, 1975
4:35 p.m.

PLACE:

The Cabinet Room
The White House

SUBJECT:

Vietnam Evacuation

President: As you know, before we got into the Phnom Penh evacuation, we had a meeting. I wanted to know what our plans were. It took place at the right time and in the best of circumstances.

I have kept in daily contact with Henry and Brent on where things stood in Vietnam. I know the Congress has been on us on this, to get it off their

SECRET/XGDS

DECLASSIFIED
WH/EO 12356, Sec. 3.4 (D)
MR 92-11, #20 - NSC Nr. 5/19/93
By let NARA Date 10/22/93



CLASSIFIED BY Henry A. Kissinger
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B (1,3)
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON Imp. to det.

back. I think it is very important to stay there as long as we can contribute, to evacuate in a way that will not promote panic, and to contribute as much as possible to a peaceful solution.

Now, I understand we are down from 6000 to about 1600.

Schlesinger: It has gone up to 1700.

President: I have ordered a reduction by Friday night of to 1090.

Schlesinger: That is a lot in one day.

President: That is what I ordered. There will be another order that by Sunday non-essential non-governmental personnel must be out of there. The group that is left will stay until the order is issued to take them all out.

We just got a reply from the Soviets to a request we made. Henry, give us the background and the message.

Kissinger: At the President's request, I contacted Dobrynin Saturday to request their assistance to permit a safe evacuation and the beginning of political discussions and asked them to help create the conditions where this would be possible. [See U. S. oral note at Tab A]. We also told him specifically on Monday that we would take a serious view of an attack on Tan Son Nhut. We have received the following reply.

[He reads from the Soviet message at Tab B.]

This means, in effect, that if we keep the dialogues going we have an assurance against military action as we pull our people out. On the political side, the tripartite arrangement gives us the hope of a coalition solution which can be better than surrender. We will go back to the Soviets to find out what they mean by implementation of the Paris Accords and to say we will cooperate. We will say we won't take precipitate action and we assume they won't.

President: My interpretation is that the lull which we have is a result of this. You could assume they weren't yet ready and would move when they are ready. This looks like they are willing for an agreement within the framework of the Paris Accords and that we can keep our people there, and reduce them until such time as we decide to remove them.



We have been through a difficult time. It was a risk and a gamble but it was my responsibility and I didn't want to do anything to risk the situation. I think I was right, and I will continue to act that way.

Every one should be guided by the 1090 and the further removal of non-essential, non-governmental people. These are Americans, not Vietnamese dependents, who I assume are adding to the list everyday, in a ratio of about four to one.

Brown: About 15 to 1 in the last few days.

Kissinger: You asked the Soviets about American and South Vietnamese evacuation and they only answered about American citizens.

Vice President: How do you read that?

Kissinger: I read that as they are tactically saying "Get them out" but they can't give us approval.

President: I take it to mean we can't use force.

Schlesinger: We are delighted with such restraint.

President: But I want to do whatever is needed to secure the American evacuation. George, would you review the plan for us?

Brown: The first stage we are in now. In the second stage we would send two companies in just to keep order. If we lost the airfield we would go to helos. We have two landing zones -- one at old MACV compound and one at the Embassy. We can put about six helos down at once. We would put 1100 Marines in with the first wave. The helos would come in and evacuate the 1100 people in an hour and 15 minutes. Then they would go back for the Marines.

President: Then the total is about 2 1/2 hours.

Kissinger: Graham [Martin] said he had a deal with the airborne commander and he would keep order.

President: How about the typhoon?



Kissinger: There is no danger now.

President: I think these orders to Martin will get us within the 1100 required.

Clements: How many Vietnamese are we talking about?

Kissinger: We don't know.

Colby: I think we should move as soon as possible for the high-risk people.

Kissinger: We told him yesterday and today to get moving on the high-risk people.

Brown: I think we should keep mixing the loads -- Americans and Vietnamese -- so we don't get criticized for leaving American personnel there as hostages.

Schlesinger: Henry's message is a source of reassurance, but there are some sources of concern. Their control might be limited; there are reports of sappers going in; and reports of attempts to stir up unrest; and there are some risks of attempts to go after Americans. In light of Henry's message, that appears manageable. A more difficult problem is population control, especially in conditions where they might have to fire on Vietnamese. You know we have favored going down to minimum levels. We should consider what we do if Americans are held hostage. We could say no ships will go into Hanoi until the hostages are released. So we should reduce as low as possible.

Colby: We have some people who are prisoners now.

Schlesinger: Just missionaries.

Colby: No. Also some advisors.

President: I understand the risk. It is mine and I am doing it. But let's make sure we carry out the orders.

Vice President: You can't insure the interests of America without risks.

President: With God's help.

Vice President: It takes real courage to do what is right in these conditions.



~~SECRET~~ (A)

ORAL NOTE

The President wishes the following brought to the urgent attention of General Secretary Brezhnev.

For the past three years Soviet-American relations have proceeded from the Basic Principles of May 1972, and above all from the principle of restraint. The situation in Viet-Nam has now reached a point, that the United States and the USSR must consider the long term consequences ~~[of further developments there for Soviet-American relations and]~~ for the international situation as a whole. There is little to be gained from a debate over the origins of the present situation or over which parties must be held responsible.

Under present circumstances our overriding concern is to achieve controlled conditions, which will save lives and permit the continued evacuation of American citizens and those South Vietnamese to whom we have a direct and special obligation. This can only be achieved through a temporary cease fire.

We urgently request that the Government of the USSR use its good offices to achieve a temporary halt to the fighting. In this connection, we are prepared to discuss the special political circumstances that could make this possible. We request the most expeditious answer.



CLASSIFIED BY Henry A. Kissinger
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1-1

~~SECRET~~

Talking Points

-- We are not going to the Chinese or any other intermediary; nor are we willing to approach the DRV.

-- We are going to Moscow because it is in our long term mutual interest that the situation be brought to its conclusion in a manner that does not jeopardize Soviet-American relations, or affect the attitude of the American people toward other international problems.

-- If there is a temporary cease fire, we would be prepared to convene the Paris Conference immediately, or we can consider alternatives that the Soviet Union might work out with Hanoi.

-- During the period of a temporary cease fire we would be willing to halt military supplies.

-- But we are concerned that there will be attacks on the airfields, that will make it impossible to continue an orderly reduction in American citizens.

-- Moreover, we have detected Soviet surface-to-air missiles within 50 miles of Saigon; any attack on passenger aircraft would create a most dangerous situation.

-- In light of the developing military situation, we need to know now whether there is a chance for a temporary halt in the fighting that might permit a political process to start.

[-- The Soviets' answer will have a significant bearing on our relations.]



~~SECRET~~

Delivered to the Secretary at State Dept.
4:00 p.m., April 24, 1975

As it has already been said to the President immediately after the message of the President of April 19 was received by L. E. Brezhnev we took appropriate steps to get in touch with the Vietnamese side in this connection.

As the result of those contacts now we can inform the President about the following: the position of the Vietnamese side on the question of evacuation of American citizens from South Vietnam is definitely positive. The Vietnamese ^{have} stated that they have no intention to put any obstacles in the course of military actions to evacuation of American citizens from South Vietnam and that now in fact favorable conditions have been established for such an evacuation.

At the same time it was emphasized that in the struggle for achieving a political settlement the Vietnamese side will proceed from the Paris Agreement. We were also told that the Vietnamese do not intend to damage the prestige of the United States.

Informing the President of the above in a confidential manner L. E. Brezhnev expresses his hope that the President will duly appreciate such a position of the Vietnamese side and will not allow any actions on the United States part which would be fraught with a new exacerbation of the situation in Indochina.

CLASSIFIED BY Harry A. KISSINGER
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SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5 B (1)
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON 2000-01-01



NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

April 28, 1975

Roosevelt Room

7:23 - 8:08 p. m.

Participants:

President Ford
Vice President Rockefeller
Secretary of State Kissinger
Secretary of Defense Schlesinger
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George S. Brown
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby
Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll
Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs
W. R. Smyser, Senior Staff Member, National Security Council

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4.

MR 92-10, #21, NSC 84r, 10/7/94

By KAH, NARA, Date 2/6/95



President: Brent Scowcroft this afternoon brought me the report that two Marines had been lost, so I felt we should convene the National Security Council to discuss the situation in Saigon.

Who can bring us up-to-date?

Colby: I think I can.

What has happened is that the Viet Cong have rejected Minh's cease-fire offer. They have now added a third demand, which is to dismantle the South Vietnamese armed forces. Bien Hoa is in the process of falling. The Viet Cong have cut off the road to the Delta and are advancing on Vung Tau.

It is a very dangerous situation. The North Vietnamese are bringing artillery within range of Tan Son Nhut airport. At 4:00 a.m. they had a salvo of rockets against Tan Son Nhut. This is what killed the Marines. This salvo was followed by 130 millimeter artillery fire. Some of this artillery fire hit the American side, not the Vietnamese side like last night.

Three aircraft have been shot down. All are Vietnamese. They include a C-119, an A-1, and an A-37 helicopter. The latter was shot down by an SA-7 missile. The presence of these missiles increases the risk factor greatly.

President: Has the rocket and the other fire now stopped?

Colby: No. It's continuing.

Schlesinger: The latest information is that there is still artillery fire against the airport. A flight of C-130's is going in to take out the DAO (Defense Attache Office). They hope to be able to land, but they can be waved off by a controller on the ground if it is unwise. North Vietnamese ground forces are one kilometer from Tan Son Nhut and advancing.

Colby: Those forces are of platoon strength, perhaps one or two platoons.

President: We should not predicate our judgments on two platoons. How many people is that?



Schlesinger: About 100.

President: When did you get a report that the firing was last going on?

Schlesinger: About 30 minutes ago.

President: What is the status of the runway?

Schlesinger: Landable.

President: Do you have air controllers?

Schlesinger: There are some on the ground.

President: Are there any C-130's on the ground?

Schlesinger: Only one, which had been hit. We are loading weapons and bombs on aircraft in Thailand. Our aircraft are in the air for potential cover, but they are over the water.

President: What kinds of bombs are these? Are they the "smart" bombs?

Brown: They are regular iron bombs. The aircraft do not carry "smart" bombs unless they have special equipment.

President: How many DAO people do you have at the airport?

Schlesinger: About 400, including contractors.

President: If the C-130's can land, they should. How many are there?

Brown: The plan is for 70 sorties, with each of 35 aircraft coming in twice.

President: Who will decide whether they come in?

Brown: The controller on the ground at Tan Son Nhut.

President: If these attacks continue, would he bring the aircraft in?



Brown: If it is artillery fire, he would wave them off. If it is rocket fire, he would bring them in.

He had a message yesterday that one artillery unit was to fire on two targets. They have now hit those two targets, an apron and a gymnasium used for processing.

President: For the processing of Vietnamese?

Brown: Yes.

Kissinger: Was that artillery or rocket fire?

Schlesinger: It is not certain.

Brown: What worries me more than the artillery fire is the report of an aircraft being shot down by an SA-7. Choppers or aircraft are defenseless against the SA-7. The only way to deflect the missiles is to use flares, but I am not sure whether the aircraft we are using are equipped for that. Of course, we have to do our mission, but if the risk becomes too great, we may need to turn off the lift.

President: If the risk is too great, the man on the ground has to judge. We cannot. That means we have to move to get the DAO people out as well as the Embassy. That is one possibility.

If they can land, they should carry out the operation as before. But when they find that it is getting too hazardous the last two C-130's have to take the DAO out.

I think we have to continue operations if the people on the ground say that conditions are alright, but if it is a question of two remaining aircraft they should be filled by the DAO personnel and not by Vietnamese.

Kissinger: I have talked to Graham Martin. I think the DAO should come out anyway. I also think the Embassy should be thinned down. If we have to go to suppressive fire, then we must remove the Americans. Otherwise, it is too risky.

Schlesinger: There is no authority now for suppressive fire, only for the chopper lift.



President: If we do not fire until they do, we are bound to lose some choppers to the SA-7's.

Schlesinger: It is a hard weapon to counter.

Brown: We cannot do much about them.

President: Will there be air cover above?

Brown: Whenever you say. Also, tankers.

President: Should we not have that cover even for the C-130's?

Brown: We can do that, as Jim Schlesinger says. The aircraft and the tankers are ready.

President: How much time will be lost before the aircraft come in?

Schlesinger: There are two issues. First, once we get to the point where we have to have air cover, we should pull out anyway.

Kissinger: I think if they see air cover, it helps.

President: If we have air cover but do not use it, they would still have enough radar to pick up our presence.

Brown: The artillery people do not. Nor do the SA-7 people.

I think we should not commit the air cover until we are ready to use it. The risk is such that they should only be used for a job, rather than to be picked up on radar.

Schlesinger: They may only be doing this shooting to bloody us. If they see fighters, they may hit us hard.

Kissinger: It may, of course, have the opposite effect. Even if some of their local units do not see our aircraft on radar, the high command in Hanoi will know it very quickly. I do not think that they will intensify their attacks.

Schlesinger: They may have pre-positioned orders to attack us.

Brown: I think they have pulled out the stops. The platoons that we have spoken of are being followed by more. They came in through that same area during the Tet offensive. They are ready for the battle of Tan Son Nhut.



President: If we decide on air cover, we have to go for the evacuation of Saigon and not just Tan Son Nhut. How soon will we know if the C-130's can land?

Brown: Within an hour. We have an open line to Graham Martin.

Kissinger: I think we have three decisions:

-- First, how long to continue to operate, and whether the C-130's should just pull out Americans or Vietnamese as well. In either event, today is clearly the last day for fixed-wing operations.

-- Second, whether you want to have air cover flown over Tan Son Nhut or wherever the evacuees can be picked up.

-- Third, when we order suppressive fire. In this connection, I agree with Jim that it should only be used when pulling out Americans.

My concern is between balancing the risk to pull out all the stops if they have not yet decided to do so. I think if they see American air cover it would have a good effect.

Schlesinger: I think we can go in over the area with less equipment.

Clements: If you decided that this is the last day for civilian evacuation, we can proceed on that basis.

President: I think so. This is the last day for the evacuation of the Vietnamese.

Kissinger: Then the DAO will go out with them.

Brown: Regarding whether our air cover will be seen: We are putting in a Navy CAP above the air cover and Gayler has told them to jam the radar of the SA-2's.

President: Can the SA-7 not be jammed?

Brown: No. It is heat-seeking.

Scowcroft: We have just received a report that the airport is still taking fire. The two North Vietnamese platoons are still in the cemetery near Tan Son Nhut. The C-119 was shot down over the airport, and the other aircraft elsewhere. We also understand the C-130's are still on the way but are not landing.



Schlesinger: The North Vietnamese have 4,000 sappers in Saigon. They will hit the Embassy if we attack by fire.

Kissinger: I think that, if we fire, we have to pull out the entire Embassy. Maybe we should consider leaving in a nucleus of volunteers, but I would pull everybody out. The North Vietnamese have the intention of humiliating us and it seems unwise to leave people there.

President: I agree. All should leave.

We now have made two decisions:

-- First, today is the last day of Vietnamese evacuation.

-- Second, if we fire, our people will go.

Are we ready to go to a helicopter lift?

Brown: Yes, if you or Ambassador Martin say so, we can have them there within an hour.

Kissinger: I understand your orders are that the Vietnamese should go today, and that the DAO and most of the Embassy should go with the rest of the fixed-wing aircraft.

President: I think they should be phased in.

Kissinger: A reduced staff should be left at the Embassy. If there is suppressive fire, we go to the plan to evacuate all Americans. If we have to go out, priority will go to the Americans.

Schlesinger: We should get Embassy people out today also.

Kissinger: Yes.

We should not let it out that this is the last day of civilian evacuation.

Vice President: Does the press know of the two Marines being killed?

Schlesinger: Yes. We will see how the four Chairmen react.



Brown: The Secretary said that Americans should have priority if we have to terminate the lift, but we will not know this. We will not know in advance which is the last aircraft.

Schlesinger: We should give them subtle priority.

President: We have to leave it to General Smith to phase them into the evacuation.

Kissinger: If the Americans get on the first aircraft, the situation will be out of control. We have to space them out. The people who should stay to the end are the team to handle the evacuation of the Vietnamese. The others should go.

President: We have to mix them. We do not want too many at the end.

Brown: I do not want to see Americans standing there waiting for the last plane.

Schlesinger: There is one question, Henry, that we need to think about. When it is known at the end of the day that this was the last day, will it not provoke panic against our Embassy?

Kissinger: I believe that, as the new Government comes in, our obligations are terminated.

Even without shelling, we might have a transformation of the Minh Government from a pro-American to a neutralist to an anti-American Government. This could have happened this week.

To answer the question, it could produce panic. It could also make the Government turn on us. With 150 people, this would be more manageable.

President: They are one hour away. Even later today, if the situation deteriorates more rapidly than we think, we can go.

Brown: We are 25 minutes away from a ship to the Embassy. We can go on your orders or Graham Martin's.

Schlesinger: There is a chance of a night attack.

Kissinger: I think the Embassy is safer from a disciplined attack than the DAO.



I think during the day tomorrow you will probably need to decide whether you want to take out the Embassy tomorrow night. You minimize the panic if you do not take the Embassy to Tan Son Nhut. So you may need the Embassy compound for evacuation.

I think we should take everybody we can out today, and then decide on the Embassy tomorrow.

President: What if the C-130 cannot land; then we cannot get people out by fixed-wing aircraft.

Kissinger: You can then go to an emergency airlift at the DAO and the Embassy, and you have no choice but to evacuate everybody. Then you might also have to go to suppressive fire.

Schlesinger: I think we should still try to get the C-130's in.

Brown: We are more ready to get people out at Tan Son Nhut than at the Embassy, since at the latter we need to blow up trees and to clear the parking lot.

President: We first need to see what happens at Tan Son Nhut. Then we have to use the DAO and Embassy lift.

Kissinger: If they keep up their attacks, it is because they have decided to bottle us up. We should then get everybody out.

President: Who executes?

Kissinger: I suggest we draft a message here, clear it with Jim and George, and show it to you. We will then send it to Graham Martin. Jim can send the same message to Gayler through his channels.

Then everybody should know what we are doing.

Clements: If we cannot get the C-130's in, we will need to make a critical decision at midnight or 1:00 a.m.

President: That decision would be whether to get out. Do (in)

Schlesinger: Should we soften up the artillery first?



Brown: I would ignore the artillery for the chopper flight if the artillery is on the air field. But if it is on the DAO or on the Embassy, we cannot go in. In the first case, we would hope that they cannot shift too rapidly. In the second case, we may need to suppress.

Kissinger: But you would have air cover any way to protect the lift.

President: Where is the air cover now?

Brown: I recommend that it come in when we go to a helicopter lift.

President: We can await that until we see whether the C-130's can get in. If they cannot, then we go to Option 3. The decision will be forced by whether the C-130's can or cannot operate.

Is that agreed? (All nod.)



FLASH
DE WTE #2378 1190107
Z 292101Z APR 75
FM THE WHITE HOUSE

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

~~TOP SECRET~~ SENSITIVE VIA MARTIN CHANNELS WH50782

TO: AMBASSADOR GRAHAM MARTIN

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER

1. THE PRESIDENT HAS MET WITH THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AND HAS MADE THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS:

A. IF THE AIRPORT IS OPEN FOR FIXED-WING OPERATIONS TODAY, YOU ARE TO CONTINUE THE EVACUATION OF HIGH RISK VIETNAMESE BY FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT. YOU ARE ALSO TO EVACUATE BY THE END OF THE DAY ALL AMERICAN PERSONNEL AT TAN SON NHUT AS WELL AS ALL BUT BARE MINIMUM PERSONNEL FROM THE EMBASSY.

B. WHILE YOU SHOULD NOT SAY SO, THIS WILL BE THE LAST REPEAT LAST DAY OF FIXED-WING EVACUATION FROM TAN SON NHUT.

C. IF THE AIRPORT IS UNUSABLE FOR FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT OR BECOMES SO DURING THE DAY AS A RESULT OF ENEMY FIRE, YOU ARE IMMEDIATELY TO RESORT TO HELICOPTER EVACUATION OF ALL REPEAT ALL AMERICANS, BOTH FROM THE DAO COMPOUND AND FROM THE EMBASSY COMPOUND. FIGHTER CAP AND SUPPRESSIVE FIRE WILL BE USED AS NECESSARY IN THE EVENT OF HELICOPTER EVACUATION.

2. ADMIRAL GAYLER WILL BE RECEIVING IDENTICAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM DEFENSE.

3. WARM REGARDS.

0200

***** WHSR COMMENT *****

MC FARLANE, ROOMAN

RECALLED

PSN:022717

PAGE 01

OF 01

TOR:119/01:07Z

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***** ~~TOP SECRET~~ *****S COPY

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By let, NARA, Date 1/10/00

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COMOUT TSC 000 624 APR. 27, 75 1605

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4, COMOUT, 011
FASTCAST

XXKK, ONEL

~~SECRET~~

523-119-FYI (0125) FREQUENT WIND (C)

LADY ACE 09 HAS THE AMBASSADOR AND HIS IMMEDIATE STAFF ON
BOARD AND THAT THEY ARE MOVING THE GSF TO THE ROOF TOP

FOR PICKUP.

--2103Z

CC98521

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NSA letter 8/21/98

By KBH NLF Date 11/4/98



COMOUT TSC 000 624 APR. 27, 75 1612+ 0441464000*****
4, COMOUT, 011
FASTCAST

XXKK*ONEL
~~SECRET~~

523-119-FYI (0125) FREQUENT WIND (C)
REPORTS ARE THAT THERE ARE 200 AMERICANS LEFT TO EVAC.
GUNNER SIX TO GSF COMMANDER BRING UP PERSONNEL UP THRU
TH BUILDING DO NOT LET THEM (THE SOUTH VIETS) FOLLOW
TOO CLOSELY. USE MACE IF NECESSARY BUT DO NOT
FIRE ON THEM.
--2109Z

CC98533



CLASSIFIED

COMOUT TSC 000 624 AFN. 27.75 1624

04417560004000

4.COMOUT.711

FASTCAST

CLASSIFIED

XXKK.0NEL

~~SECRET~~

523-119-FYI (0125) FREQUENT WIND (C)

LADY ACE 09 REPORTS FEET WET AT 2121Z. LADY ACE 13 REPORTS
OUTBOUND WITH 16 USA AND LADY ACE 10 GOING IN FOR LNDG.

--2122Z

CC98548



CLASSIFIED

COMOUT TSC 000 624 APR. 27, 75 1635. 044225200090000
4, COMOUT, 011
FASTCAST

XXKK, ONEL

~~SECRET~~

523-119-FYI (0125) FREQUENT WIND (C)

LADY AGE 10 IS OUTBOUND. THEY HPT THAT IT WAS CS TYPE GAS
BEING THROWN AT THEM. NO FURTHER INFO PASSED.

--2133Z

CC98558



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COMOUT TSC 000 624 APR. 29, 75 1637. 0442275000000000
4, COMOUT, 011
FASTCAST

XXKK, ONEL

~~SECRET~~

523-119-FYI (0125) FREQUENT WIND (C)

LADY ACE 14 IS GOING INTO THE ROOF TOP, IF HE HITS ANY
GAS HE WILL PULL OFF IMMED.

--2136Z

CC98559



CLASSIFIED
CLASSIFIED

COMOUT TSC 000 624 APR. 27, 75 1644. 0442552000000000
4. COMOUT, 011
FASTCAST

XXKK, ONEL

~~SECRET~~

523-119-FY1 (OT25) FREQUENT WIND (C)

SPECTRE REPORTS NUMEROUS FIRE FIGHTS ALL AROUND THE BUILDING.

SWIFT 33 INBOUND FEET DRY. LADY AGE 14 REPORTS OFF WITH
21 PAX.

--2142Z

DO NOT INTENT PROD REPORTING AT THIS TIME.

CC98573



CLASSIFIED
CLASSIFIED

COMOUT TSC 000 624 APR. 24.75 1641+
4.COMOUT,011
FASTCAST

0442442000****

XXKK,ONEL

~~SECRET~~

523-119-FYI (OT25) FREQUENT WIND (C)

LADY ACE 14 IS ON THE ROOF HE REPORTS SMALL ARMS FIRE ON THE
NORTH EAST CORNER OF THE BUILDING IN A SMALL CLUMP OF TREES
AT GROUND LEVEL. LADY ACE IS LOADING THIS TIME.

--2139Z

CC98568



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Monday, May 12, 1975
Time: 12:05 p.m. to 12:50 p.m.
Place: Cabinet Room, The White House
Subject: Seizure of American Ship by Cambodian Authorities

Principals

The President
The Vice President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General David C. Jones
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll
DOD: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
WH: Donald Rumsfeld
NSC: Lt. General Brent Scowcroft
W. R. Smyser

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE - XGDS

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With PORTIONS EXEMPTED
E.O. 12958 Sec. 1.5 (a) (b) (c)

USC ltr. 3/19/96 MR 91-20 #1


By KBH NARA, Date 3/20/96

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~SECRET~~/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

URGENT ACTION

May 12, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER
FROM: W. R. SMYER 
SUBJECT: Lessons of Vietnam

At your request, some papers have been prepared for the President and yourself on the "lessons of Vietnam".

At Tab I is a memorandum from you to the President offering some thoughts on the lessons of Vietnam and suggestions regarding public positions we might take.

At Tab II is a paper from Mr. Stearman and myself commenting on a State Department paper (Tab A) and also offering some of our own ideas regarding the lessons of Vietnam. You may wish to read these.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That you sign the memorandum to the President (Tab I) on the Lessons of Vietnam.



DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By KBH NARA, Date 2/10/00

~~SECRET~~/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY - XGDS

President:

Please go ahead, Bill, and bring us up-to-date.

Colby:

The US Seatrain container ship MAYAGUEZ was seized by the Khmer Communists about 3:15 p.m. local time about seven or eight miles from the Cambodian Island of Poulo Wei in the Gulf of Thailand. The ship was able to transmit at least two messages picked up in Jakarta and Manila after the boarding but communications from the ship were quickly broken off.

The ship was enroute to a Thai port from Hong Kong.

At last report the ship was being taken to the port of Kompong Son, about sixty miles away, under escort by a Khmer Communist gun boat.

The Island of Pulou Wei has been claimed by both Phnom Penh and Saigon although it has long been occupied by the Cambodians.
.....the Khmer Communists were planning to occupy Cambodian offshore islands, probably to reiterate the Cambodian claim vis-a-vis the Vietnamese Communists. The occupation may provide an early test for future relations between the Khmer and Vietnamese Communists.

A major factor behind the territorial dispute in the area is the potential of rich oil deposits in this area at the Gulf.

The former governments in Saigon and Phnom Penh clashed over oil exploration rights in this area last fall.

We have no hard information on why the Khmer Communists seized the ship as it was en route from Hong Kong to Sattahip, Thailand.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONSECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: Lessons of Vietnam

At your request, I have prepared some thoughts on the "lessons of Vietnam" for your consideration and for your background information in dealing with further press questions on the subject.

It is remarkable, considering how long the war lasted and how intensely it was reported and commented, that there are really not very many lessons from our experience in Vietnam that can be usefully applied elsewhere despite the obvious temptation to try. Vietnam represented a unique situation, geographically, ethnically, politically, militarily and diplomatically. We should probably be grateful for that and should recognize it for what it is, instead of trying to apply the "lessons of Vietnam" as universally as we once tried to apply the "lessons of Munich".

The real frustration of Vietnam, in terms of commentary and evaluation, may be that the war had almost universal effects but did not provide a universal catechism.

A frequent temptation of many commentators has been to draw conclusions regarding the tenacity of the American people and the ultimate failure of our will. But I question whether we can accept that conclusion. It was the longest war in American history, the most distant, the least obviously relevant to our nation's immediate concerns, and yet the American people supported our involvement and its general objectives until the very end. The people made enormous sacrifices. I am convinced that, even at the end, they would have been prepared to support a policy that would have saved South Vietnam if such an option had been available to use.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY - XGDS

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 11958, Sec. 3.5
NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By XGDS, NARA, Date 2/10/00

The ship was some 60 miles southwest of Kompong Som, but within 8 miles of the island of Pulo Wei, claimed by the Khmer Communists.

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A Panamanian charter vessel was seized by the Khmer Communists last week in roughly the same area, but was subsequently released

President:

When?

Colby:

We are not sure.

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..... There is evidence that some forces landed on at least one of these islands.

President:

What is the best estimate of where the ship is now?

Colby:

It was proceeding under its own steam at what we estimate to be about 10 miles an hour. Considering when it was picked up, it would be in or near the port now.

Schlesinger:

When I left the Pentagon, the ship was already only about 10 miles out.

President:

What are our options?

Schlesinger:

We can have a passive stance or we can be active. We can do such things as seizing Cambodian assets. We can assemble forces.

It must not be forgotten that the decisions of American administrations that involved this nation in the war were generally supported at the time they were taken, and that they were supported not only among the people at large but among the political elements and among the journalists who later came to oppose the war. The American people generally supported and applauded President Eisenhower for a decision to partition Vietnam and to support an anti-Communist government in the South. The American people, and particularly the American media, supported President Kennedy's decision to go beyond the restrictions on American involvement that President Eisenhower had set and they also supported his decision to permit American involvement in the removal of President Diem -- although the extent of that involvement was not clear at the time. Many who were later to be labeled as "doves" on Vietnam then insisted that South Vietnam had to be saved and that President Diem's removal was essential to save it. You yourself will remember the strong support that the Tonkin Gulf resolution won on the Hill and the general support for President Johnson's decision to send troops. President Nixon won an outpouring of support for the decision to withdraw American forces at a gradual pace, as well as for the Paris Peace Agreement.

If one could offer any guidelines for the future about the lessons to be drawn regarding domestic support for foreign policy, it would be that American political groups will not long remain comfortable in positions that go against their traditional attitudes. The liberal Democrats could not long support a war against a revolutionary movement, no matter how reactionary the domestic tactics of that movement. They had accepted the heavy commitment to Vietnam because of President Kennedy, whom they regarded as their leader, but they withdrew from it under President Johnson.

One clear lesson that can be drawn, however, is the importance of absolute honesty and objectivity in all reporting, within and from the Government as well as from the press. U. S. official reports tended for a long time to be excessively optimistic, with the result that official statements did not make clear to the American people how long and how tough the conflict might turn out to be. After a while the pessimistic reports from journalists began to gain greater credence because such positive trends as did emerge came too slowly to justify optimistic Washington assessments. In Vietnam, the situation was generally worse than some reported and better than others reported. But the pessimistic reports, even if they were

We could seize a small island as a hostage.
We might also consider a blockade.

All these options would have to be scrutinized by the Congress because, while you have inherent rights to protect American citizens, you would soon run into the CRA.

We do not have much information on the actual situation. Such information as we have indicates that the main purpose of the Cambodian forces in occupying the islands may have been to keep them from their brethren in South Vietnam. It could be a bureaucratic misjudgment or a bi-product of an action against South Vietnam.

The Cambodians have already seized three ships: a Panamanian, a Philippine and now an American. They did release the first two ships. We do not know, in handling this sort of thing, how good their communication is.

Kissinger:

How far from the islands was the ship when it was picked up?

Colby:

About 7 to 8 miles.

Schlesinger:

In some information we picked up, they appeared to be claiming 30 miles.

Rumsfeld:

Isn't this piracy?

Schlesinger:

Yes.

Kissinger:

As I see it, Mr. President, we have two problems:

-- The first problem is how to get the ship back.

-- The second problem is how the U. S. appears at this time.

inaccurate, began to look closer to the mark until almost any government statement could be rejected as biased, not only by the opposition but by an increasingly skeptical public.

Another lesson would be the absolute importance of focusing our own remarks and the public debate on essentials -- even if those essentials are not clearly visible every night on the television screen. The Vietnam debate often turned into a fascination with issues that were, at best, peripheral. The "tiger cages" were seen as a symbol of South Vietnamese Government oppression, although that Government was facing an enemy who had assassinated, tortured and jailed an infinitely greater number; the "Phoenix" program became a subject of attack although North Vietnamese and Viet Cong tactics were infinitely more brutal. The Mylai incident tarnished the image of an American Army that had generally -- through not always -- been compassionate in dealing with the civilian population. Even at the end, much of the public discussion focused on President Thieu's alleged failure to gain political support, but it was the Communists who rejected free elections and who brought in their reserve divisions because they did not have popular support. And at home, it was argued that your aid request meant American reinvolved when nothing was further from your mind.

Of equal importance may be a dedication to consistency. When the United States entered the war during the 1960's, it did so with excesses that not only ended the career and the life of an allied leader but that may have done serious damage to the American economy and that poured over half a million soldiers into a country where we never had more than 100,000 who were actually fighting. At the end, the excesses in the other direction made it impossible to get from the Congress only about 2 or 3 percent as much money as it had earlier appropriated every year. When we entered, many did so in the name of morality. Before the war was over, many opposed it in the name of morality. But nobody spoke of the morality of consistency, or of the virtue of seeing something through once its cost had been reduced to manageable proportions.

In terms of military tactics, we cannot help draw the conclusion that our armed forces are not suited to this kind of war. Even the Special Forces who had been designed for it could not prevail. This was partly because of the nature of the conflict. It was both a revolutionary war

Actions that/^{we}would take to deal with one of these problems may not help to deal with the other. For example, I think that if they can get us into a negotiation, even if we get the ship back, it is not to our advantage. I think we should make a strong statement and give a note to the Cambodians, via the Chinese, so that we can get some credit if the boat is released. I also suggest some show of force.

What do we have in the neighborhood of the incident?

Schlesinger:

We have the CORAL SEA, which is now on its way to Australia for ceremonies.

President:

How long would it take to get there?

Schlesinger:

About two to three days.

President:

Do we have anything at Subic?

General Jones:

We have the HANCOCK and other vessels, but it would take about a day and a half at least to get them down there.

Kissinger:

We may not be able to accomplish much by seizing their assets, since they are already blocked. Perhaps we can seize a Cambodian ship on the high seas. But I think that what we need for the next 48 hours is a strong statement, a strong note and a show of force.

Schlesinger:

That would mean turning around the CORAL SEA.

Kissinger:

Can we use any aircraft?

Schlesinger:

We will have aircraft over the island to see what kind of forces there are.

Kissinger:

Can we find out where Cambodian ships are around the world?

fought at knife-point during the night within the villages. It was also a main force war in which technology could make a genuine difference. Both sides had trouble devising tactics that would be suitable for each type of warfare. But we and the South Vietnamese had more difficulty with this than the other side. We also had trouble with excesses here: when we made it "our war" we would not let the South Vietnamese fight it; when it again became "their war", we would not help them fight it. Ironically, we prepared the South Vietnamese for main force warfare after 1954 (anticipating another Korean-type attack), and they faced a political war; they had prepared themselves for political warfare after 1973 only to be faced with a main force invasion 20 years after it had been expected.

Our diplomacy also suffered in the process, and it may take us some time to bring things back to balance. We often found that the United States could not sustain a diplomatic position for more than a few weeks or months before it came under attack from the same political elements that had often advocated that very position. We ended up negotiating with ourselves, constantly offering concession after concession while the North Vietnamese changed nothing in their diplomatic objectives and very little in their diplomatic positions. It was only in secret diplomacy that we could hold anything approaching a genuine dialogue, and even then the North Vietnamese could keep us under constant public pressure. Our diplomacy often degenerated into frantic efforts to find formulas that would evoke momentary support and would gloss over obvious differences between ourselves and the North Vietnamese. The legacy of this remains to haunt us, making it difficult for us to sustain a diplomatic position for any length of time, no matter how obdurate the enemy, without becoming subject to domestic attack.

In the end, we must ask ourselves whether it was all worth it, or at least what benefits we did gain. I believe the benefits were many, though they have long been ignored, and I fear that we will only now begin to realize how much we need to shore up our positions elsewhere once our position in Vietnam is lost. We may be compelled to support other situations much more strongly in order to repair the damage and to take tougher stands in order to make others believe in us again.

I have always believed, as have many observers, that our decision to save South Vietnam in 1965 prevented Indonesia from falling to Communism and probably preserved the American presence in Asia.



Clements: Admiral Holloway says he is not sure there are any.

Kissinger: Are there any merchant ships?

Schlesinger: We doubt it.

Colby: They may have some coastal stuff, some small vessels and the like. But that is it.

Clements: We should not forget that there is a real chance that this is an in-house spat. In that area there have been two discovery wells, drilled by Shell and Mobil. One made a significant discovery. We are talking about 600-700 million barrels and perhaps even 1 or 1 1/2 million barrels. I think that is what this fuss is all about.

President: That is interesting, but it does not solve our problem. I think we should have a strong public statement and a strong note. We should also issue orders to get the carrier turned around.

Kissinger: I think we should brief that this is an outrage. Even if they quarrel with each other, they cannot use us.

President: We should get the demand and our objection to what has happened out to the press before they get the story from elsewhere.

Ingersoll: They may want to hold the ship as a hostage to our equipment.

Schlesinger: That was our first thought, before we looked into it further.

Kissinger: Does the CORAL SEA have mines aboard?

This not only means that we kept our troops. It also means that we kept our economic presence as well as our political influence, and that our friends -- including Japan -- did not feel that they had to provide for their own defense. When we consider the impact of what is now happening, it is worth remembering how much greater the impact would have been ten years ago when the Communist movement was still widely regarded as a monolith destined to engulf us all. Therefore, in our public statements, I believe we can honorably avoid self-flagellation and that we should not characterize our role in the conflict as a disgraceful disaster. I believe our efforts, militarily, diplomatically and politically, were not in vain. We paid a high price but we gained ten years of time and we changed what then appeared to be an overwhelming momentum. I do not believe our soldiers or our people need to be ashamed.



General Jones:

I do not believe it has any now, but we can make arrangements to get them there.

Kissinger:

What is the minimum period for which mines can be set? I recall during the bombing of Haiphong mines were set for 30 days. But I wonder if they can be set for shorter periods.

Schlesinger:

We can get the mines in within 24 hours.

Kissinger:

Can we then have them set for a short time?

Schlesinger:

We can look into that.

President:

We should be prepared to do this, using the HANCOCK. Do you believe the CORAL SEA cannot do it?

General Jones:

I doubt it. Different types of equipment and different types of mines are involved. I suggest that we get our contingency plans together as soon as possible and start assembling a task force to go in that direction.

Of course, we have other means. We have the B-52's that could do it.

Schlesinger:

The mines are at Subic; the B-52's are in Thailand.

President:

I think we should turn the CORAL SEA around. We should get everything organized in Subic Bay. We should make a strong statement at once before the news hits from other sources. We should also get a full photo run of the island and of the harbor where the ship is.

Vice President:

May I say something?

President:

Please.

Vice President:

I think this will be seen as a test case. I think it will be judged in South Korea. I remember the PUEBLO case. I think we need something strong soon. Getting out a message and getting people ready will not do it.

I think a violent response is in order. The world should know that we will act and that we will act quickly. We should have an immediate response in terms of action. I do not know if we have any targets that we can strike, but we should certainly consider this. If they get any hostages, this can go on forever.

Schlesinger:

They have 39.

Rumsfeld:

Americans?

Schlesinger:

We think so.

Vice President:

Now you can take action before you begin to get protests. I believe the authorities there only understand force. There is an old Chinese saying about a dagger hitting steel and withdrawing when it hits steel, and that is the impression that we should convey.

President:

I think that that is what we will do. We will turn around the CORAL SEA. We will get the mining ready. We will take action.

Kissinger:

If it is not released by Wednesday, we will mine.

Vice President:

Public opinion will be against it in order to save lives. Is there anything we can do now?

Schlesinger:

We could sink the Cambodian Navy.

Clements:

We could hit the patrol ship.

Vice President: Or we could seize the island.

Rumsfeld: When did we get word of this?

Ingersoll: At 5:15 at the National Military Command Center.

Kissinger: I agree with the Vice President that we should show a strong position. We should also know what we are doing so that it does not look as though we want to pop somebody. We could mine their harbors. This will not get the ship. Or we could take the ship, or we could scuttle it.

Schlesinger: They will have the ship already. It is like the PUEBLO. Once it got to Wonsan it was hard to bring it back.

Kissinger: In Korea, some things might be possible, but with this new group it is very uncertain what will happen.

President: How soon could we take the island?

General Jones: We have helicopters in Thailand and we could do it fairly quickly.

Kissinger: We cannot do it from Thailand.

Schlesinger: You know that the reconnaissance missions are being flown from Thailand.

Kissinger: That we can get away with, but I do not believe we can run military operations from there.

Vice President: What if we had a series of escalating actions? Some we would take now, others later. We have to show that we will not tolerate this kind of thing. It is a pattern. If we do not respond violently, we will get nibbled to death. We can announce these things to make clear what we are doing.

Schlesinger:

The trouble with an announcement of future steps is on the Hill. Anything that we announce, Congress will need to be briefed.

President:

We have now looked at the options. We will issue a statement and we will send a message. We will turn around the CORAL SEA. We will get a task force assembled at Subic and maybe get it underway. Perhaps we will scramble a force to take the island.

I would like to get something straight now. Brent told me at 7:45 that the ship had been seized, but there should be a quicker way to let us know this.

Scowcroft:

I agree. That is when I heard of it.

Rumsfeld:

I also.

Kissinger:

I was not told until my regular staff meeting this morning, and then it was mentioned as an aside.

Schlesinger:

This is a bureaucratic issue. The NMCC did not become alarmed because it was not a U.S. Navy vessel.

President:

This would be alright in ordinary times but not now.

Colby:

I will get a wrap-up of the sequence of notification.

Rumsfeld:

Can we notify merchant ships of the danger?

General Jones:

We will see.

Rumsfeld:

I do not see the advantage of announcing the warning. We could make a case on either side. To the extent we want to be forceful, we do not need to make it public.

Vice President:

I do not think turning the carriers around is action. Congress will get into the act. The doves will start talking. But, unless the Cambodians are hurt, this pattern will not be broken.

Kissinger:

The main purpose of using a statement is that we have no choice. We have to have a reaction. But the statement should be very strong. It should demand the immediate release of the ship, and it should say that the failure to do so could have serious consequences.

President:

It should point out that this is a clear act of piracy.

Kissinger:

Then we should get our military actions lined up. My expectation is that we should do it on a large scale. We should not look as though we want to pop somebody, but we should give the impression that we are not to be trifled with.

If we say that it should be released, then we can state that the release is in response to our statement.

I would relate what we do to the ship, rather than to seize an island.

Colby:

We may wish to point out that they released other ships. This gives them a way out.

Rumsfeld:

They can figure out their own way out.

President:

But, if you take strong action, let us say nothing first. I would like to get the DOD options by this afternoon.

Schlesinger:

The actions should put them under pressure. If we mine the harbor, they will simply sit. We have got to do something that embarrasses them.

Rumsfeld:

That is why I think we should look at other options.

President: We should have some options today.

Clements: We should keep the oil in mind. That is an asset.

Kissinger: I see a lot of advantage in taking the island rather than in mining the port. Let us find out what is on the island, how big a battle it would be, and other relevant factors.

Schlesinger: We will have a reconnaissance report by this evening. I am sure it would not take a large force.

What kind of clarification would you want us to use regarding the authority and your relation with the Congress?

President: There are two problems:

- First, the provisions of summer, 1973.
- Second, the war powers.

Regarding the military options, I would like to know how they would be hamstrung and what we want to do. I can assure you that, irrespective of the Congress, we will move.

Kissinger: There are three things we need to know:

-- First, what force is required to take the island.

-- Second, what force is required to take Kompong Som, and to take the ship and the people. On the whole, I would prefer this.

-- Third, what it would take to mine the harbor.

Vice President: Does it make sense to do this if the boat is in it?

Schlesinger: You can perhaps accomplish the same thing by quarantine as by mining.

Kissinger: I doubt it. We learned in North Vietnam that mines work better. With a quarantine, you have a confrontation and a crisis regarding every ship.

Schlesinger: We would have to be tough in such confrontations.

Vice President: I agree with Rumsfeld.

Why should we warn them? There must be plans that we can use, out of Thailand.

Kissinger: If we bomb out of Thailand, we would be out of there within a month.

President: Let us review it again. Within an hour or so, there will be a public statement. Let us make an announcement ahead of time, and a tough one so that we get the initiative. Let us not tell Congress that we will do anything militarily since we have not decided. I think that it is important to make a strong statement publicly before the news gets out otherwise.

Kissinger: We will be pressed this afternoon.

Rumsfeld: How about a statement that gives the facts, states that this is an act of piracy, and says that we expect the release. We will not say that we demand the release, because that will activate the Congress. I think you get the same thing without speaking of a demand. Moreover, to demand seems weaker.

Schlesinger: It is not weak to say that we demand the release.

Kissinger: I would demand.

Rumsfeld: Perhaps not publicly, but privately.

Kissinger: If Congress takes us on, I think we have a good case.

President: With the military appropriations bill coming up, they would not want to give a picture of running out.

Kissinger: Then we should keep quiet. Let them explain about the three ships.

Vice President: How long does it take to get the carriers there?

Schlesinger: About 1 1/2 days.

Kissinger: I would overfly with reconnaissance.

President: It should be visible.

Kissinger: That we can get away with, but not bombing.

Vice President: Aren't those bases being closed anyway?

Kissinger: Not necessarily.

President: Alright. Let us get a message to the Chinese Government as soon as possible.

Vice President: Could we not ask Thai permission to use the bases?

Kissinger: No.

Schlesinger: Only reconnaissance is possible, but if we ask, they will refuse everything.

Kissinger: Lee Kuan Yew has asked us to stay in Thailand as long as possible to give him time to work on getting the defenses of Malaysia ready. Bombing from Thailand will get us out quickly.

President: How far away is Subic?

Kissinger:

To bomb, even from Clark, we would be in trouble. This is a symptom of Vietnam. We can bomb from Guam with B-52's or from the carriers. But we should know what we are doing. I am more in favor of seizing something, be it the island, the ship, or Kompong Som.

President:

This has been a useful discussion. Thank you. I will look forward to seeing the options.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Tuesday, May 13, 1975
Time: 10:40 p.m. to 12:25 a.m.
Place: Cabinet Room, the White House
Subject: Seizure of American Ship by Cambodian Authorities

Principals

The President
The Vice President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. David C. Jones
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll
DOD: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
WH: Donald Rumsfeld
John Marsh
Robert Hartmann
Philip Buchen
NSC: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft
W. Richard Smyser

DECLASSIFIED
EO 12958 Sec. 2.8

MR 91-20, #3 NSC 11-3/19/96

By KBH NARA Date 3/20/96

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE - XGDS



President: Brent, can you tell us what the situation is?

Scowcroft: With regard to the boat that I told you about, we do not have much time. Our aircraft has used riot control agents twice. That has delayed the boat but it has not stopped it. It is now about six miles from Kompong Som, according to the pilot. The pilot is not at all sure that he can disable the boat without sinking it.

President: I thought the first boat had reached the shore.

Schlesinger: It got to the island.

Jones: It was in range.

President: I understand we sank the second one. And the third one is the one we are now talking about.

Scowcroft: That is correct. That boat is now six miles from Kompong Som.

President: Did the pilot try riot control agents?

Scowcroft: They were tried and they did not work. Now the pilot is not sure what to do next.

Schlesinger: He is not certain that there are Caucasians on board.

President: Let's look at it. If they got to shore, and we have done the other things we are contemplating, there will not be much opportunity for them anyway.

Kissinger: They will hold them for bargaining.

Hartmann: How can the pilot tell whether the men are Caucasians?

Schlesinger: By a number of signs, such as their size and the color of their skin.

Scowcroft: It is not an easy identification. It is very tough.

Schlesinger: I would think that avoiding bargaining chips is less of an objective than not being in a position where the Cambodians can say that the F-4's killed our own men.



President: What do we do? Should we let them go into port?

Schlesinger: Let's continue to try to stop them with riot control agents. We understand there are 8 to 9 men on board who seem to be Americans. There are others below who may be Americans. The pilot thinks there may be more Americans.

President: What do you recommend?

Schlesinger: I recommend we sink the speedboats. I do not think we should sink the other boat but should rather continue to use the riot control agents.

Scowcroft: The pilot is reluctant to attack if he is under instructions not to sink the boat.

Schlesinger: That is true. He originally thought that he could disable the boat without sinking it. Then he became reluctant.

President: What do you think?

Kissinger: I have just come back into this problem, having been out of town all day. My instinct would have been as follows:

We have two problems:

-- First, the problem of the crew and the ship and of how we win their release.

-- Second, our general posture which goes beyond the crew and the ship.

But that sort of thing comes later.

In the immediate situation, I think I agree with Jim. We will take a beating if we kill the Americans. At the same time, we must understand that we cannot negotiate for them once they are on the mainland. If you are willing to take that position, then I think we can let them go. We should not let them become bargaining chips.

Scowcroft: We have already done it on one.



Schlesinger: There were no Caucasians on it.

Kissinger: We have a pilot who thinks there may be Caucasians. It would have been a much better position for us to take that we will simply hit anything that leaves the island.

President: Right.

Kissinger: Now we are debating with the pilot.

President: I gave the order at the meeting to stop all boats. I cannot understand what happened on that order, because I heard that it did not go out until 3:30 .

Schlesinger: It went out by telephone within half an hour after you gave it.

Jones: We talked to Burns, the Commander out there, immediately. The confirming order went out later. But our communications are so good that we can get all the information back here immediately to Washington in order to make the decisions from here.

President: Was the order given, and at what time, not to permit any boats to leave the island or come into it? I was told it was not given until 3:30. That is inexcusable.

Jones: That was the written order, not the verbal order.

President: Let's find out when it was given.

Clements: To assist General Jones, I was with him in the Situation Room when he gave the order even before he left the White House.

President: Let's find out what happened. It is inexcusable to have such a delay.

Now let us talk about the problem of the moment. It is a different situation, and I reluctantly agree with Jim and Henry.



Schlesinger: I think we should destroy the boats that still remain at the island.

President: That is your recommendation. What do you think, Henry?

Kissinger: I'm afraid that if we do a few little steps every few hours, we are in trouble. I think we should go ahead with the island, Kompong Som, and the ship all at once. I think people should have the impression that we are potentially trigger-happy. I think that once we have our destroyer on station, that is ideal.

Schlesinger: I agree. It will go in at noon.

Kissinger: In the meantime, I think we should sink the boats that are at the island.

Rumsfeld: I thought the HOLT would get in at 8:00 a.m.

Schlesinger: We understand it is doing 21 knots, not 25.

Scowcroft: I have got to get the word out. What should I tell them?

President: Tell them to sink the boats near the island. On the other boat, use riot control agents or other methods, but do not attack it.

Marsh: Supposing the boats near the island have Americans on it. Should we send some order to use only riot control agents there?

Kissinger: I think the pilot should sink them. He should destroy the boats and not send situation reports.

President: On one boat, there is a possibility of Caucasians. On the others, we can't be sure.

Jones: Suppose we say in our order that they should hit all the boats in the cove, not just two.

Kissinger: We don't need to decide on the cove right now. We have some time.



President: Is it 11:00 o'clock there now?

Schlesinger: It is 10:00 o'clock.

President: How many hours away is the HOLT?

Kissinger: Fourteen hours.

Jones: (Raising a chart) I have tried to put all this in a chart, indicating when the key actions would take place. The HOLT, we expect, will arrive at 12:30 Washington time tomorrow. The CORAL SEA and the HANCOCK will arrive later. We are not sure of the latter's arrival time because it is having trouble with one propeller shaft.

The Marines are all airborne. They are on the way to Utapao. That is the 1,000 Marines. The 150, with their helicopters, are already there and on the alert. The 1,000 Marines will arrive around 0300 tomorrow morning. That is the time for the first one. After that the others arrive every few hours.

President: Then the HOLT arrives at 11:30 Eastern Daylight time tomorrow. That is 2330 Cambodia time.

And the CORAL SEA about 28 hours from now.

Jones: It is making 25 knots. The plots are pretty good. It is moving towards the spot.

President: That is not flank speed.

Jones: That is the best time that they can do.

President: Flank speed is 33 knots.

Jones: The Navy says that that is the best time that they can make.

Rumsfeld: The information this afternoon was that the HANCOCK would arrive on Friday.

Jones: This is very tenuous. They are working on one of the shafts.



Rumsfeld: That is 2200, Friday, the 16th?

Jones: No, the 15th.

Schlesinger: We are in serious trouble on the mechanical side. One shaft is out on the HANCOCK. The OKINAWA has an oiler out. It is making only 10 knots. There has been a series of mishaps.

President: What can be done before daylight ends over there today?

Schlesinger: We have 11 choppers at Utapao. We can run operations against the vessel. In addition, we can land on the island with 120 Marines. We can support that with the force from Okinawa. All together, we would have 270 Marines. In all probability, we could take the island. The Marines estimate that there might be about 100 Cambodians on the island. We would prefer to land with 1,000.

President: If you do not do it during this daylight, you have a delay. How long would it be?

Schlesinger: 24 hours. We do not have the HOLT there yet. The HOLT will arrive at noon tomorrow our time. If it is to do anything, I would prefer to wait until the first light on the 15th. Until the CORAL SEA arrives, all we can use are the helicopters at Utapao.

Kissinger: How would the Marines get down?

Jones: On ladders.

Schlesinger: The helicopters would hover.

Kissinger: But if there are 100 troops on the island, why do we not attack it?

President: In this daylight cycle, you could put 120 on the ships, and 270 on the island?

Jones: The total lift is 270. Our plan was to seize the ship with 120, and then to use the Marines from Okinawa to try to go on the island.



It is hazardous to go onto the island with this first group because you do not have time to recycle. We would have to let them remain there overnight, against a force that we do not know.

Kissinger: Does the CORAL SEA have helicopters?

Jones: No. It has only two or so that it uses itself. But we could take the Marines on to the CORAL SEA, and thus get them close to the island.

Kissinger: I understand we only have 11 choppers.

Colby: Couldn't the 270 protect themselves against the force on the island?

Jones: We have nothing to confirm the exact force on that island.

Kissinger: I do not see what we gain by going on with that force tonight. If you sink the boats in the area, and all who approach, it does not matter if we have anybody else on the island. At that point, nothing will be moving.

My instinct would be to wait for the HOLT and the CORAL SEA. You can then work with the Marines from the CORAL SEA. Nothing can happen in the meantime. Then I would assemble a force and really move vigorously.

President: In other words, the time you gain in this cycle is not worth the gamble.

Kissinger: Later you can do more. It might work with the 270. But it is a risk. It should be decisive and it should look powerful.

Jones: But it cannot be in 24 hours, only in 48. Once you start cycling, it takes time.

Schlesinger: I think that Henry (Kissinger) is thinking of going tomorrow night.

Rumsfeld: But you have only a few hours left of daylight.



Jones: That would not be enough.

Schlesinger: We need the morning of the 16th for a coordinated assault.

Kissinger: We are talking about 48 hours.

President: In other words, you are talking about Thursday night our time.

Jones: On Wednesday night, the CORAL SEA will help a little with its fighters. But not with Marines. Maybe the HANCOCK will do it.

Kissinger: You also have the HOLT.

Jones: With the CORAL SEA, you have other vessels as well. You will have a total of five ships. You would have a good force, but it is very late at night to begin to cycle the Marines.

Colby: Our estimate was that there were 2,000 in Kompong Som. There is not a large force on the island.

President: Do you think we can figure with 100?

Colby: Yes. The KC have just arrived in power. They have probably not had time to man the island more fully.

Clements: In the time frame that you are talking about, there will not be an island worth taking. All the Americans will be gone.

President: Not if we knock out the boats. Unless, of course, they leave at night.

Clements: Right. I think they will get out. The HOLT will protect the ship. But that is not what matters. I doubt that there will be anything on the island.

Rumsfeld: Can we not use flares for this?

Jones: The main thing we use at night is infra-red. We can read it at night. The P-3's also have searchlights and flares.



Rumsfeld: The P-3's should be good at keeping the boat under control.

Jones: Yes, unless the weather is bad.

Clements: The small boats can get through. You cannot get control.

Colby: The KC may say something soon.

President: It seems that at a minimum we should wait for the next daylight cycle, with the HOLT getting there.

Kissinger: The HOLT will be there then.

President: Right. Is it the unanimous view that we should withhold action until after the CORAL SEA has a full day there?

Schlesinger: I think you should wait.

Colby: This is not my business. I do not think you should go tonight. But I worry about what might happen later. If they get locked in, if they take reprisals, it would be very difficult for us.

Clements: I would like to take a middle position. Once the HOLT gets there, we will have some control. We can do a great deal.

Colby: I think that with the Marines, you have to go soon.

Kissinger: I am very leery about that operation using ladders.

Schlesinger: If there is token resistance on the island, the Marines can handle it. If there is more, they can try to lock in and get more Marines to land the next day, with the HOLT for additional support. It is a close call. There are the pressures of time. It is also possible that the Cambodians will decide to execute our men.

Colby: Once we take that ship, the clock is ticking.



Clements: The HOLT can get them, by speaking to them with loud-speakers. It can let them know our position.

Kissinger: But that is not the issue. We should not look as though people can localize an issue. We have to use the opportunity to prove that others will be worse off if they tackle us, and not that they can return to the status quo.

It is not just enough to get the ship's release. Using one aircraft carrier, one destroyer, and 1,000 Marines to get the ship out is not much. I think we should seize the island, seize the ship, and hit the mainland. I am thinking not of Cambodia, but of Korea and of the Soviet Union and of others. It will not help you with the Congress if they get the wrong impression of the way we will act under such circumstances.

As for the 270 Marines, it had several components. There is an advantage in speed. The problem is if anything goes wrong, as often does, I think against 100 KC you would lose more Americans because you do not have overwhelming power. I am assuming we will not negotiate. We must have an unconditional release. On balance, I would like to get a more reliable force.

Clements: If you want the ship and the Americans, why not let the HOLT do it? Let the HOLT broadcast that if the Americans are not released, all hell will break loose.

Kissinger: What would hell mean in a case like that?

President: Let's do an add-on to Colby's suggestion. The HOLT is there. You land 270 Marines. You bomb the airport at Sihanoukville.

Colby: My schedule is to land the Marines today.

Schlesinger: Until the CORAL SEA gets there, we have only the aircraft from Thailand. The inhibitions on the use of the aircraft from Thailand are greater.

President: No, you have the B-52's on Guam. They can be used.

Colby: If you knock out every boat, you have effectiveness.



Kissinger: That is still localizing it. We will not get that many chances.
As Jim says, it would exacerbate the Thai problem.

President: If we order the Marines to go from Utapao, we could get 270 in there.

Jones: That was before we lost two helicopters on SAR. I would urge against going this daylight. The Marines would just be landing at Utapao. The helicopter pilots would be tired. Nobody would be mated up yet. It would be a difficult operation to be launching at that time, especially since we could not follow up the same day.

Kissinger: If you were to give the orders now, Mr. President, there would still be some hours of delay before the messages were received and before the preparations were made. By then we would really only have three more hours of daylight left in order to conduct the operation.

President: So we rule out any action on this daylight cycle. Then, on the next day, the HOLT gets there. We then have some more options. The CORAL SEA, however, doesn't get there until the next cycle.

Kissinger: If you wait 24 more hours, you have the HOLT and you also have the fact that you can use 270 Marines.

Jones: And, in fact, you have 250 more than you can put in. You also have the CORAL SEA.

Kissinger: I am not sure that I would let the HOLT go up against the vessel. It may be best to keep the HOLT where it can blockade the island. Then we can seize the island.

Schlesinger: I agree with Kissinger. But we have to keep in mind that there are forces on the island. That gives them time to prepare. It also gives them time to scuttle the ship.

Kissinger: But they can still scuttle the ship, even with the HOLT alongside. If we could seize the ship quickly, I would agree. I did not know that the HOLT could board.

President: Unless sailors are different now, they are not good boarders.



Schlesinger: Could any Marines do it?

Jones: We could get the Marines on the ship, but then we could not use them for other things.

The suggestion is to go with the first light on the 15th, to get the HOLT and to hold the island.

Kissinger: My suggestion is to seize the island. We cannot do anything tonight. By tomorrow morning, we can put the Marines on the HOLT. They can operate. I would go for the island at daybreak of the 15th.

Schlesinger: The problem with that is that the CORAL SEA will not be there. If you want an overwhelming force on the island, you should wait until the 16th.

Kissinger: The ideal time for what I have in mind is the 16th. That would not just include the island but Kompong Som, the airport and boats.

President: If you wait until the 16th, you have maximum capability. But the people in Utapao should be prepared to operate as soon as the HOLT gets there, at 11:30 tomorrow night. The Marines should be alerted.

Kissinger: The HOLT gets there at noon tomorrow. So we can go from first light. We could seize the island and the ship. That, however, would not give us the CORAL SEA for such operations as we would wish to run against Kompong Som.

Schlesinger: You can get 250 Marines in helicopters.

Colby: That would mean 500 in two cycles.

President: The operational orders should be set up so that the HOLT and the Marines can go. We do not know what will happen in 24 hours. They have options also. We can make a decision tomorrow if we want to. But we should have orders ready to go so that they can move within 24 hours. That would be for the HOLT, the Marines, and the B-52's.

Rumsfeld: When would it start, then?



Kissinger: At 2200 hours tomorrow. I think that when we move, we should hit the mainland as well as the island. We should hit targets at Kompong Som and the airfield and say that we are doing it to suppress any supporting action against our operations to regain the ship and seize the island.

If the B-52's can do it, I would like to do it tomorrow night. Forty-eight hours are better militarily. But so much can happen, domestically and internationally. We have to be ready to take the island and the ship and to hit Kompong Som.

President: I think we should be ready to go in 24 hours. We may, however, want to wait.

Schlesinger: We will be prepared to go on the morning of the 15th. We will see if we can get the Marines on the HOLT. At first light, we will have plans to go to the island. Simultaneously, we will go for the ship.

We will have the B-52's at Guam ready to go for Kompong Som. But I think there are political advantages to using the aircraft from the CORAL SEA. You will have more problems on the Hill with the B-52's from Guam.

Vice President: Why?

Schlesinger: The B-52's are a red flag on the Hill. Moreover, they bomb a very large box and they are not so accurate. They might generate a lot of casualties outside the exact areas that we would want to hit.

President: Let's see what the chiefs say is better, the aircraft from the carrier or the B-52's. It should be their judgment.

Kissinger: But the CORAL SEA would delay us 24 hours.

Rumsfeld: But do we have to wait for the CORAL SEA actually to arrive?

Scowcroft: No. Their planes can operate at considerable distance.

President: On the 15th, we can use the B-52's from Guam. On the 16th, we also have the aircraft from the CORAL SEA.



Jones: Except, if you use the CORAL SEA, it limits some assets. Everybody is now on alert. We can do it when you say. We are ready to go.

Rumsfeld: Is it not possible that the CORAL SEA aircraft could strike Cambodia even when the CORAL SEA is still hours away?

Schlesinger: I'm not sure it would be close enough. Let me check.

Rumsfeld: The CORAL SEA could be there near that time.

Schlesinger: Let me check.

President: You may have an operational problem. If you have to turn the carrier into the wind in order to dispatch and recover aircraft, you may lose time.

Schlesinger: Yes, but if you go for the 15th, you do not need its presence so soon if you can use the aircraft from a distance.

Kissinger: What do we have on the CORAL SEA?

Jones: We have fighter aircraft, including F-4's and A-7's.

Kissinger: Would they be more accurate than the B-52's?

Jones: Not necessarily. It depends on the type of target.

Buchen: I see two problems:

-- The first is Cooper-Church Amendment.

-- The second is international law.

President: On international law, I do not think we have a problem. They have clearly violated it.

Buchen: We have the right of self-defense, but only self-defense. The Cooper-Church Amendment says no actions in Indochina.

Kissinger: I think you can legitimately say that our aircraft are suppressing hostile action against our operation.



President: We cannot be that concerned in this instance.

Marsh: This afternoon, we had the NSC prepare a paper saying what we would do. It showed that you would use force in general terms. The reaction from the people we talked to was very favorable.

Clements: I hate to have us lose sight of our objectives in this case. Those objectives are to get the Americans and the ship. If we want to punish people, that's another thing. I think that dropping a lot of bombs on the mainland will not help us with the release of the Americans.

President: I think we have to assume that the Americans were taken from the island and that some were killed. This is tragic, but I think that we have to assume that it happened. Does anybody disagree?

(General expressions of agreement.)

Vice President: At a briefing yesterday, Congressman Zablocki, one of the proponents of the War Powers Act, said that he would tell the press that the U.S. could bomb the hell out of them.

Schlesinger: We are not inhibited by the War Powers Act, only by Cooper-Church.

Colby: We think there are about three T-28's at Kompong Som airfield. They could use them. So there is a potential threat at Kompong Som against our forces.

President: Can we verify this?

Colby: This is from a photograph taken on the 12th.

Rumsfeld: How are those aircrafts equipped?

Colby: With bombs and guns.

Kissinger: I think the worst stance is to follow Phil's concern. If we only respond at the same place at which we are challenged, nobody can lose by challenging us. They can only win.



This means, I think, that we have to do more. The Koreans and others would like to look us over and to see how we react. Under certain circumstances, in fact, some domestic cost is to our advantage in demonstrating the seriousness with which we view this kind of challenge.

President: Phil and I have argued for years.

Buchen: I have to state the problems that we face.

President: In this daylight cycle, unless something unusual comes up, we will try to prevent boats going to and from the island.

Kissinger: The latest intelligence shows that there are several small patrol boats near the island in the cove. I think we should sink them.

President: I agree.

Schlesinger: There are four boats.

President: I think we should sink any boats that can be used to try to move the Americans.

Rumsfeld: But not the ones that carry Americans.

Schlesinger: I disagree with Henry in one case. The legal situation in Indochina is unique. We should emphasize that. The restraints of our actions are different from the restraints anywhere else.

Kissinger: I would hit, and then deal with the legal implications.

President: Bill (Colby) should verify that the T-28's are there. At the second daylight cycle, we are prepared to do more. The HOLT will be there and the Marines will be ready to go on it and to be put on the island, with the B-52's and perhaps the aircraft from the CORAL SEA prepared to strike Kompong Som. But, unless there is some unusual development, the actual action will take place 24 hours later.



Schlesinger: On the 16th.

Kissinger: You can decide it then.

President: The preferable time is 24 hours later.

Kissinger: That is when the best forces will be available. But that has to be weighed against other considerations for the extra 24 hours that you lose. I remember 1969, when the EC-121 was shot down off Korea. We assembled forces like crazy. But in the end, we did not do anything. Maybe we shouldn't have. We will never know.

Colby: There is one other justifiable target in the Kompong Som area. The old Cambodian Government had 25 patrol boats in the Ream Naval Base.

(The President, Kissinger, and Schlesinger almost simultaneously remark along the lines that that might be a worthwhile target.)

Schlesinger: But this sort of thing would require the gunships out of Thailand.

Kissinger: I think we should do something that will impress the Koreans and the Chinese. I saw 'Feng Hsiao-Ping's comments in Paris.

President: Are there an airfield and a naval base there at Kompong Som?

Colby: Yes.

President: Why not hit both of them? There would be as many objections to hitting one as two of them.

Schlesinger: The question is whether you use the B-52's or the carrier aircraft. The B-52's may represent the best image for what Henry is trying to accomplish. But, for Congress and others, other aircraft would be better.

President: Bill has to verify what there is at the airport.

Schlesinger: We'll put some T-28's on the base.



President: Tomorrow, we will still have the options as to what we should do.

Jones: On Guam, if we are to do anything, we have to start pretty soon. But there are lots of press there.

Rumsfeld: You would be launching at about 4:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Kissinger: How long does it take to load?

Jones: There are many planes to load and to get ready.

Kissinger: Is the first thing tomorrow still time enough?

Jones: I'm not sure.

President: Are there any others in the Far East?

Jones: Only at Utapao.

President: We do not want that.

Rumsfeld: It should not take long to calculate the answer on the question of using the CORAL SEA.

Vice President: Everybody wants to know when you are moving. In New York, where I just was, people expect you to be doing things. So any steps you take in preparation will be understood.

President: How many B-52's would you use?

Jones: Perhaps 6 or 9.

President: Let's say 9. How many do you have on Guam?

Jones: I am not sure. About 20 or more.

President: Every time I have looked at a B-52 base, they are always doing something. It should not be that unusual. I think you should load them, and get them ready.

Jones: There are about 50 reporters on Guam right now, because of the refugees.



Kissinger: Can you tell the commander to shut up?

Schlesinger: It will get out, no matter how hard you try.

Vice President: Perhaps it would be good to have it get out. I don't think we should cavil.

President: Let's have them get ready to carry out the mission if we decide to do it.

Hartmann: I am not an expert on military affairs. I am just an old retired captain in the Reserve. I have been listening in terms of what the American public wants. I think the American public wants to know what you are going to do.

This crisis, like the Cuban missile crisis, is the first real test of your leadership. What you decide is not as important as what the public perceives.

Nothing, so far as I know, has gone out to the public so far, except that we are taking steps. It may be that we should let the public know something of the steps that you are taking. The public will judge you in accordance with what you do. We should not just think of what is the right thing to do, but of what the public perceives.

Kissinger: I would say nothing until afterwards. That will speak for itself. Then you can explain what you have been doing.

If you say something now, everybody will be kibitzing.

President: But the press should know of the NSC meeting.

Hartmann: I think we should consider what the people think we are doing.

Rumsfeld: The delay worries me.

Hartmann: Yes.

Kissinger: If we are going to do an integrated attack, I think we have to go in 22 hours. We should not wait for a later cycle.



I cannot judge if there would be a problem in taking the island. We're saying that it will be one annihilating blow. I cannot judge if 270 Marines can do it.

Rumsfeld: There would 500.

Kissinger: But there will be 270 for four hours. They will have the HOLT support. Perhaps they will also have some support from the CORAL SEA.

President: Do we have Marines on the CORAL SEA?

Jones: I'm not sure.

Kissinger: If the CORAL SEA can launch against Kompong Som, it can launch against the island. We have to be sure that the landing has a chance of success.

Jones: The probability that the Americans are gone causes the problem. I think we have a high probability.

Kissinger: Then my instinct is with Rummy. We should go tomorrow night or earlier.

President: Everything will be ready. But, if you do it in the next cycle, you have the problem of Thailand.

Kissinger: The ideal time would be Thursday night. But I am worried that in the next 48 hours some diplomatic pressure will occur, or something else. So we have to weigh the optimum military time against the optimum political time. For foreign policy and domestic reasons, tomorrow is better.

President: The Thai will be upset.

Kissinger: That is correct, but they will also be reassured.

Rumsfeld: Can we be sure there is anybody on the island? We might just take a walk.

Kissinger: If the Americans are on the mainland, then we have to rethink.



Rumsfeld: If we look at this tonight, we will know tomorrow.

President: If Jones goes back to the Pentagon tonight with the orders to prepare, we will have details tomorrow.

Jones: Everything is now moving, except the B-52's.

Ingersoll: What is the flying time of the B-52's?

Kissinger: About 6 hours.

Jones: Maybe longer.

Schlesinger: Can we tanker them out of Guam?

Jones: Yes.

Kissinger: What will we say about the boats that have been sunk?

Buchen: We have to make a report to the Hill.

Schlesinger: It may not get out that quickly.

President: My answer would be, that we have ordered that no enemy boats should leave the island or go out to it, but that if they did, they would be sunk.

Kissinger: I think a low-key press statement can be issued, saying what has happened. We should tell the truth. We should say it in a very matter-of-fact way, at a DOD briefing.

Schlesinger: It will not stay low-key.

President: The order was issued that no boats should leave.

Kissinger: We should say nothing about the riot control agents. We should say that there were Americans possibly being moved, and that lives were at stake. Some Americans are still on the island. In pursuit of these objectives, the following boats were sunk.

One other reason is that it is not inconceivable that the Khmers will cave, and they should come in response to something that we had done.



Schlesinger: Should we say that they were sunk from aircraft from Thailand? That is your problem.

Kissinger: I am worried about it getting out of hand. We will look sneaky and furtive about something we should be proud of.

But the Thai thing does give me trouble. I think the Thai military will love it. But the Thai Government will say that it does not like it.

The Liberals on the Hill will put forward a recommendation to withdraw our forces from Thailand. They will match this with some requests from the Thai Government.

Rumsfeld: I think that is a good issue.

Hartmann: Bob Byrd, whom I regard as a good antenna of sentiment, says that we should act.

Marsh: Case says we should go in.

Vice President: In our statement, should we not call them launches?

Schlesinger: The boats are of different sizes.

Kissinger: I would urge that the spokesman make a short announcement at noon tomorrow. He should explain why we are doing it. He should say that it was ordered by you, executed by the National Security Council, and then answer no other questions. This would be noon. By 8 o'clock, we will have decided the other. That will add to your strength.

(General concurrence.)

END OF MEETING



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Tuesday, May 13, 1975
Time: 10:22 a. m. to 11:17 a. m.
Place: Cabinet Room, The White House
Subject: Seizure of American Ship by Cambodian Authorities

Principals

The President
The Vice President
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph Sisco
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General David C. Jones
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

DOD: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
WH: Donald Rumsfeld
Robert Hartmann
John Marsh
NSC: Lt. General Brent Scowcroft
W. R. Smyser

DECLASSIFIED BY 2025 10/22/2025 Sec. 3.0
NOT RECLASSIFIED EXEMPTED
E.O. 13526 Sec. 1.5 (A)(5)(c)(d)

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

MR 91-20 #2 NSC 04r. 3/19/96
By KGH NARA, Date 3/20/96

President:

Bill, will you please bring us up to date.

Colby:

The Mayaguez is at anchor just off Koh Tang Island, about 30 miles southwest of Kompong Som.

Until late yesterday evening, the ship was being held near where it was seized in the vicinity of Poulo Wei Island, about 40 miles further to the southwest.

Shortly after midnight, however, an American reconnaissance aircraft observed the ship at Koh Tang Island.

At least two U.S. reconnaissance aircraft have reported receiving small arms fire from a gunboat, and from the Mayaguez itself.

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The latest U.S. reconnaissance flights observed the crew being transferred from the ship via a tugboat to Koh Tang and then being led off toward the interior of the island.

Scowcroft:

Do we know it is the crew?

Schlesinger:

No.

Colby:

Although the men could be moved to the mainland at any time, the Khmer Communists may intend to keep them on the island until some final decisions are made regarding the crew and vessel.

So far, the Khmer Communist government has not made a public statement regarding the Mayaguez, and Prince Sihanouk today in Peking denied any knowledge of the incident.

In the event of a U.S. military effort, the Cambodian Communists would have limited means of reacting.

They would attempt to resist a recapture of the ship, an attack on the accompanying patrol craft, or a landing on Koh Tang. They presumably have few troops or weapons to meet any such effort, however.

The Cambodian Communists have no capability to thwart a mining effort against Kompong Som, and the harbor defenses are not impressive. The port and military camp are exposed and separate from the town.

President:

It looks like a very open port. Is that true?

Colby:

There is an island off it.

President:

Is it a very busy port? Are there any ships in it now?

Schlesinger:

A recent photo of ours showed no ships at the dock. There may perhaps have been one vessel around.

Vice President:

Is this the principal port of entry for Cambodia?

Schlesinger:

There has been no action at this port for a considerable length of time. It was closed because the route to Phnom Penh was closed. For a long time, U.S. aircraft were delivering everything to Phnom Penh.

Vice President:

But several years ago it was a principal port of entry. I remember there was some dispute about what was coming in through this port. The CIA said that there was not a great deal, but in fact it turned out that it was a principal port of supply for the Viet Cong. So it must be an important port to them.

Schlesinger:

It is not very much used now.

Vice President:

But this is their port of entry. It would be a major contact with the outer world, especially if they do not work with the Vietnamese; it was built originally in order to give them independence of the Mekong River which was patrolled by the Vietnamese.

President:

We used to complain about supplies coming into Sihanoukville. One reason why Sihanouk was asked to leave in 1970 was because he turned his face away from the movement of supplies into that port.

One of the purposes of our entry into Cambodia was to get this material that had been delivered there.

Vice President:

There is one thing that was a big mistake yesterday. You got the information that the American ship was already in the harbor in Kompong Som. This denied you one option, which would have been to try to prevent the ship from being taken into the harbor. But you were told that the ship was already in the port.

Schlesinger:

I did not say that it was already in the port. I said it might be.

Vice President:

I do not want to argue, but you said that it was known that when you left your department it was one hour away from the port and by the time you arrived here, it would already be in the port.

President:

I do think we have to be certain of our facts. Overnight, Brent gave me a series of different reports that we were getting about the ship's location and about what was happening. We

have to be more factual or at least more precise in pointing out our degree of knowledge. What do we know now? How certain are we of the facts with which we are dealing?

Colby:

We think that the ship is off the island as I pointed out. We understand that people are being off-loaded. We have seen it.

Jones:

I talked to the commander in Thailand who was in contact with our reconnaissance aircraft. Through this commander, I have the following report from the aircraft. He said that the ship had one anchor up, and one down.

.... Our experts tell us that it is very improbable that the Cambodians can run this ship, so that if there is any indication that the ship is moving, it must be the Americans who are running it.

Rumsfeld:

How do we know these things? How do we know that it was the Mayaguez that your reconnaissance aircraft saw?

Jones:

..... It is a positive identification. As I said, the anchors are up and down.

..... Some boats have come alongside. Through fighter runs, we kept them off. Some, however, did get to the boat. We saw some people getting off and going to the island. Then we saw them on the island. They had their heads between their legs. They appeared to be Caucasians.

President:

Was all this in daylight?

Jones:

This was just before it grew dark over there.
.....
..... This is the
sort of thing we use with our gunships and
we can get a lot of information from it.

The instructions we have to our commanders
are not to let the ship go to port. They are
to take any action not to include sinking. We
should know when it moves, when it raises
anchor, and when it raises the boiler.

We can, if necessary, disable the ship. We
can hit it abeam, just off the stern. We will
not hit people that way. We can do that with
pretty high confidence that we can stop the
ship from sailing under its own power. Of
course, if it is not sailing under its own
power, we would make the tug boat the target.

President:

How big is the ship?

Jones:

The ship is about 500 feet long. The tug boat,
of course, is rather small. But it would be
moving very slowly. It would be a very
vulnerable target.

Of course, we cannot guarantee that we could
stop it, but we think that there is a good
chance that we could keep it from going into
the harbor without sinking it. We would use
gunships. They are very precise.

Rumsfeld:

Do we know where the crew, the Americans
and the Vietnamese, are?

Jones:

We saw people coming off the ship. They had
been on the deck of the ship. We saw them go
to the island.

President: If they try to move the ship, we must take steps to stop it, without sinking it.

Jones: And with minimum loss of life. We would know in advance, when they are going to move the ship.

President: How would this information come to us? Whom does the plane contact?

Jones: The 7th Air Force Support Group at NKP. We would have a report in minutes.

President: So that, within 10 minutes, any movement would be detected and available to us here.

Jones: Of course, they can do things below the deck that we would not see, but we should know if anything important is going on. One problem, of course, is that if the weather turns bad, this would have some effect on our coverage.

President: And you have people on the ball in the Pentagon?

Jones: Quite a few.

President: How do you get the information to Brent and then to me?

Scowcroft: Last night, there were long time lags before we got the information, and there was a lot of confusion about its accuracy.

President: I am very concerned about the delay in reports. We must have the information immediately. There must be the quickest possible communication to me.

Colby:

President: We must get the information to the NSC and to me.

Jim, will you now please give us your report on the other options.

Schlesinger:

We have reviewed the options. The option to take Kompong Som requires many troops. There are about 1700 KC's in the area. So our first objective today is to keep the ship out.

If we want to take the ship, there are two options:

-- We can use the Marines and the choppers that are at Utapao. We can take off tomorrow.

-- Or, we can wait until the USS HOLT arrives, which should be around 8:00 p.m. tomorrow night, or about 12 hours later.

Jones:

It is arriving at 0530 our time. That is when the HOLT will get there.

Vice President:

That would make it the morning of our time, not the evening.

President:

I have a question about that from my World War II experience. That destroyer would have been operating at flank speed for about 36 hours. In those days it would not have much fuel left when it arrived at its destination. We would not want it to be dead in the water.

Schlesinger:

It will not be in that condition. In any case, the carrier will arrive the following morning and it will be able to refuel.

The Navy people are trained in boarding. It might be preferable to wait for the HOLT because it will be manned and able to do it. We will then have the dominant force in the area. But, of course, this may give the Cambodians time to change the situation or to try to prepare themselves. Therefore, it may be better to go by first light tomorrow.

Rumsfeld: That would be this evening, at 6:00 p.m., Washington time.

Schlesinger: It may be preferable to go in quickly. We have instructions to use gunfire to keep personnel away from the anchor chain on deck.

Vice President: Even if they are Americans?

Schlesinger: I do not think they have Americans on board except for people to man the boiler. I think they have the other Americans on the island.

Our force to take the island is now in Okinawa. In twelve hours, we can have the Marines there.

President: Twelve hours from now?

Schlesinger: Twelve hours from your order. We already have 125 Marines at Utapao.

President: They would be intended to take the ship. How about the Marines from Subic Bay? How soon can we get them there?

Jones: They are coming from Okinawa. They could go by 1844 or 1900 or the second light tonight. One day later, we could have the Marines at Utapao. We could use large choppers.

President: They could be used on the island.

Jones: This would be about 1,000. We do not know what is on the island.

Schlesinger: We asked a Cambodian defector and he told us there were about 60 troops on the island.

For the island operation, I think it is preferable to use the CORAL SEA. It gives us dominance

over the area. Also, we have its forces and helicopters.

The danger for the Americans on the island is that we do not know what the Cambodians would do. I think there is less danger if we have the dominant force. We will have Cambodians on the choppers who will be able to say that we can take the island unless they give us the Americans or the foreigners. This message would be bull-horned from the choppers at a time when we are ready to act.

Scowcroft:

This means that the force of 1,000 Americans from Utapao would be for operation to take the island, not the ship.

Schlesinger:

Right.

Colby:

We should realize that the Cambodians are tough fellows. We know that they took a Vietnamese ship and killed seven people without thinking any more about it.

Schlesinger:

When cornered, they could execute the Americans.

Hartmann:

Do we know why they took off the Americans?

Jones:

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..... whether or not they actually did
and why they might have done it.

President:

Are we keeping gunboats and other boats from the ship?

Jones:

We have not opened fire on them. We have scared some of them away by making passes at them. One boat is tied alongside the ship.

President:

Are there quite a number around?

Jones: We have had reports on boats, sometimes two or more. We hope to have better intelligence soon.

President: Isn't it dark now?

Jones: We can get the information from infra-red. We took a lot of pictures. We are now reading them out in Thailand. We hope to have a better readout after we have finished.

President: I would like to see the pictures.

Jones: They are processed there.

President: Anything on the diplomatic side?

Scowcroft: Not yet.

Vice President: May I say something?

President: Yes.

Vice President: I do not think the freighter is the issue. The issue is how we respond. Many are watching us, in Korea and elsewhere. The big question is whether or not we look silly. I think we need to respond quickly. The longer we wait, the more time they have to get ready. Why not sink their boats until they move? Once they have got hostages, they can twist our tails for months to come, and if you go ashore, we may lose more Marines trying to land than the Americans who were on the boat originally. Why not just sink their ships until they respond?

Schlesinger: We have several objectives.

First, to stop the boat from being taken into the port.

Second, to get our people back.

Third, to attack and sink the Cambodian Navy, later, after we have our ship and our people out, in order to maximize the punishment.

We do not know their motive. If we sink their vessels, it might precipitate sinking of the freighter and jeopardize getting the Americans out. It seems to me that that is the sequence of priorities. Starting that way, their reaction would be prudent.

Vice President:

I do not think the Communists respond this way. I remember the story by Mao Tse Tung about sticking a blade in until you hit steel and then you pull out your sword. If you do not meet steel, you go in further.

I think you should do everything you can as soon as possible. Later, you can destroy the port as retaliation.

Schlesinger:

I would prefer for us first to get the ship, and then to proceed against the island.

President:

Brent, what are your views?

Scowcroft:

I see two operations.

-- The first is against the ship.

-- The second is against the island.

The urgency of the island operation is to stop the Americans from going to the mainland. On the ship, it is to stop it from going to Kompong Som.

The optimum situation with the ship is to get the HOLT between that ship and Kompong Som. We cannot do that until tomorrow.

If we do not have that time, if they start to move, do we try to take the ship? Or do we wait until the HOLT gets there and we have things our way?

Jones:

We have ways of stopping them from getting it into Kompong Som. But they can scuttle it. We have to judge this.

Rumsfeld:

Can they get the Americans to the mainland?

President:

They can be doing it tonight, their time.

Jones:

As the Vice President said, if we wish to assure that the Americans are not taken to the mainland, we would have to knock out their boats.

President:

Can we knock them out?

Jones:

With gunships.

Vice President:

The longer we take, the worse it gets. If the communists do not think that you will react strong and fast, they will keep on doing this. We must do it as the Israelis do; we need to respond fast.

Scowcroft:

We must recognize that we have a problem with regard to Thailand.
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President:

Are we running our reconnaissance and our freighters from Thailand?

Scowcroft:

So far it has been OK. But if we use force, we may be in jeopardy.

Schlesinger:

There is the possibility of the opposite reaction. If they see us acting, they may change their

attitude. Publicly, they may protest, but privately, they may agree. They have done this before.

Vice President:

I agree with that.

Jones:

Earlier, we had no forces to operate to free the ship. As we discussed yesterday, we had to get our assets into place. We have them.

President:

Let me review the sequence:

-- First, we would use the aircraft to stop any boats leaving the island. You do not sink them, necessarily, but can you take some preventive action?

Jones:

Probably. We also have searchlights and flares. We will want to see if there are any Americans on board. We will need to decide whether to fire across the bow or to sink it. We would have some time. They are slow boats. That is one point. We could, with some confidence, interdict the island.

President:

-- Second, I think you should stop all boats coming to the island.

-- Third, I think we should be prepared to land on the ship tomorrow morning.

Jones:

This is not an easy operation.

On a container ship, we can only land our helicopters one at a time. There is not much space. The containers are aluminum. They would not be strong enough to support the helicopters, so we would have to rope people down. They would come down three at a time

and they would have to drop 20 feet to the deck. Of course, we would have helicopters alongside to keep heads down as we land. Still, it would be very tricky.

President:

But we could have gunships as well.

-- Fourth, to have the Marines from Utapao, 1,000 strong, go to the island. How soon could they get there?

Jones:

They can launch within ten hours after I leave here. They could launch at the second light.

Rumsfeld:

The President wanted it tonight.

Jones:

Right.

President:

So the landing on the ship can take place tonight. What about the island?

Jones:

It could be 24 hours later. We would not have the force until then. They were not on alert. It would be some hours before the launch.

President:

If they were to go on the island at dusk, tomorrow, you would have 18 hours.

Rumsfeld:

Let's put all this on a piece of paper, with the exact times, so that we all know what we are talking about.

Jones:

At the second light there?

Rumsfeld:

That would be 7:00 p.m. D.C. time. I suggest we stick to one set of times.

President:

When does the destroyer get there?

Schlesinger:

Eight o'clock (p.m.)

President:

Dusk, tomorrow night, their time?

Schlesinger:

Yes.

President: Same time as the Marines?

Schlesinger: No.

Scowcroft: Let's use one time for all this.

Schlesinger: At 7:00 p.m. tonight, Washington time, we can have some Marines ready.

At 8:00 a.m. tomorrow, Washington time, the HOLT will be in position.

Somewhere between that time, the additional Marines will be in Utapao.

Rumsfeld: This is a different set of times from what we were given earlier.

Scowcroft: Right.

President: I have to go to meet with some Congressional people. Can somebody please put all this down so that we have it in writing?

(Schlesinger showed the schedule to the President.)

President: The CORAL SEA gets in at 8:00. What about the HOLT?

Jones: We are trying to speed it up.

President: I think the first two steps can be done. Let us take them. I would like to have the next steps written in sequence as to when they can take place.

Vice President: I think we have some questions about operating on land against the Cambodians.

Marsh: Also, there is a war powers requirement.

President: First, I want to know the times. There should be a logical sequence so we can have a chance to decide. Let us do it one and two and three, etc.

Scowcroft: I have reservations about landing ^{on} the ship.

Jones: So do I.

Schlesinger: Landing on the ship is to send them a signal. If we start to hit the boats, they know we are up to something. They could kill the Americans, but I doubt it. We have the element of surprise.

President: But they can take the people out.

Vice President: I agree.

President: Let's get the facts on the times lined up.

Vice President: We do not want a land war in Cambodia.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, May 14, 1975
Time: 3:52 p.m. - 5:42 p.m.
Place: Cabinet Room, the White House
Subject: Seizure of American Ship by Cambodian
Authorities

Principals

The President
The Vice President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General David C. Jones, USAF
The Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll
Defense: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
Admiral James L. Holloway
WH: Donald Rumsfeld
John Marsh
Robert Hartmann
Philip Buchen
NSC: Lt. General Brent Scowcroft
W. R. Smyser

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WITH PORTIONS EXEMPTED
E.O. 12958 Sec. 1.5 (A)(b)(c)(d)

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE - XGDS

NR 91-20, #4 NSC Mr. 3/19/96
By 16314 NARA, Date 3/20/96

Kissinger:

We should not say yet.

Vice President:

They will know about the ship three hours in advance. They can scuttle it.

Kissinger:

Is it better to wait until 10 o'clock?

Buchen and
Rumsfeld:
President:

No.

You go ahead.

President:

Bill (Colby), can we have your report on the latest situation?

Colby:

Mr. President, we have some new information on the status of Khmer Communist forces in the Kompong Som - Koh Tang area.

The most recent reconnaissance concerning naval craft indicates that there are 24 armed ships in the vicinity of Kompong Som -- 13 coastal patrol boats, 10 riverine patrol boats, and one submarine chaser.

In addition, there are 3 utility launching craft (LCUs) at Kompong Som, and one LCM at Ream.

As for air strength, our preliminary analysis of 12 May..... showed three T-28 fighters and a total of six transport aircraft at Kompong Som airfield next to the port. There is also a substantial remaining number of some 100 T-28 aircraft left at Pochentong Airfield near Phnom Penh when it fell.

For air defense, the Communists have apparently deployed antiaircraft artillery near Kompong Som and Ream. Preliminary analysis of 13 May photography shows that there is one 37-mm antiaircraft position just south of Kompong Som, and two 37-mm positions southeast of Ream.

These weapons are some threat to aircraft flying within 3 nautical miles of their location, and under 14,000 feet.

In ground strength, KC combat forces at Kompong Som total some 2,000 troops. This force could be quickly augmented by the remaining 14,000 troops scattered throughout southwestern Cambodia.

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Photoreconnaissance of 13-14 May identified a probable 105-mm howitzer position and a possible coastal artillery position of unidentified caliber just south of Ream.

We have now observed one more large landing craft (LCU) at Kompong Som than reported in last night's briefing. This ship could transport 800 troops. This gives the KC the ability to move about 2,400 troops simultaneously.

These landing craft, if unopposed, could reach Koh Tang Island in a little over 4 hours.

The Cambodians have apparently transported at least some of the American crew from Koh Tang Island to the mainland, putting them ashore at Kompong Som port at about 11:00 last night, Washington time.

Kissinger:

How do you know that?

Colby:

From observation.

President:

Of the boat last night?

Clements:

That would be just the pilot report.

Colby:

There is some more information.

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Bringing at least some of the crew ashore suggests that the Cambodians appreciate the value of the American crew as hostages,

offering hope that they will be kept alive by their captors to preserve their usefulness as bargaining chips.

The Americans taken ashore may have been transported further inland by the Cambodians, and at present there is no way of telling where they may be.

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Of the five Cambodian gunboats that were deployed as of last night (Washington time) around Koh Tang Island, three have been sunk by American aircraft.

At latest report, only one gunboat remained a little over a mile south of the island.

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Around midnight (Washington time), a U.S. tanker enroute to Bangkok reported that a Swedish-registered refrigerator ship near Panjang Island, well south of Koh Tang, had been attacked and shot at by a Cambodian boat. At 5:00 a.m. a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft observed the ship. It showed no sign of distress, and now appears on its

normal course to Bangkok. A small boat, not believed to be a gunboat, was sighted 3 miles away, following the ship's same course and speed. According to press reports from Thailand, a Panamanian freighter was detained for about two hours in the same area today.

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President:

Is the HOLT there now?

Jones: Yes. The WILSON is there too.

President: Is this also a destroyer or a destroyer escort?

Admiral Holloway: This is a destroyer. It will be on station by 1750 Eastern Daylight Time. That means we will have two ships on station before we begin our operations.

Kissinger: Why are we not sinking the boats?

Jones: The report we have did not indicate it.

Kissinger: What mission has been given to the HOLT and to the WILSON?

Jones: The WILSON is just coming on station. We will instruct it.

Kissinger: Is the HOLT instructed to stop ship movement to the island?

Jones: The HOLT is now about 12 miles out beyond the island. It is not able to stop movement to and from the island. The reason it is that far out is that we did not want to tip our hand to the operation.

President: I had the impression that the HOLT would station itself between the ships and the land. I am amazed at this.

Jones: It is night, Mr. President. I do not recall any specific instructions to this regard.

President: It does no good to have the destroyer 12 miles out. It can't stop a boat. Why did we hurry to get it there if it is going to stay that far out?

Jones: We got it there because we wanted it to help in the operations we will conduct.

Rumsfeld: How about the T-28's that are now at Phnom Penh airport? Could they help oppose our operation at Kompong Som?

Colby: Yes, but they could not remain in the air for long at that distance from their base.

Jones: They are not a real factor.

Rumsfeld: I am thinking of the airport. If they could use it, then we would have a stronger argument to hit the airport.

Jones: Theoretically they could, but they would not have much time on station.

President: When does the CORAL SEA get there? What about the HANCOCK or the OKINAWA?

Admiral Holloway: CORAL SEA aircraft are now within the range of the objective area. So it's on station.

The HOLT is also on station. She stayed out beyond the island because of the plan to put Marines on her. That is why she is over the horizon.

The CORAL SEA is within the range of tactical air and can put them in. The HANCOCK could arrive on the scene around noon of the 16th, D. C. time. She is loaded with helicopters.

The WILSON will be on station this evening.

President: So, as of now, the HOLT is there, the CORAL SEA is ready, and the WILSON will be there soon.

Admiral Holloway: In two hours.

President: What is the recommendation of the Defense Department now regarding operations?

Schlesinger:

Dave (Jones), please give it.

Jones:

(Showing a chart) We recommend that we land tonight on the island and on the ship. We can do it with high assurance of success. We have the B-52's on alert but we do not recommend using them. From the targeting standpoint, it represents overkill. We might use them for political or diplomatic reasons, though that would seem mixed.

President:

Are all the chart numbers in our time?

Jones:

Yes.

We would send people as follows:

The Marines to recapture the boat and to dismantle any explosive agents.

The helicopters can go at first light. They can get people onto the Holt. It would take two hours for people to get organized and cross to the MAYAGUEZ. They could start out with riot control agents. This probably would not incapacitate them long, perhaps for about 10 minutes. The HOLT would then come alongside and all the Marines would come over and hopefully seize control of the vessel. Our Marines would inspect it, so would an OD team. Then it would be moved out.

President:

The helicopters come from where?

Jones:

From Utapao.

Next, the tactical air. We have tactical air on the scene now. We have gunships, fighters, etc. We can suppress fire. We have instructions to minimize fire in case the Americans are there, but to protect the people who are landing.

Eight helicopters with 175 Marines aboard will land on the island around sunrise. There is a four-hour recycle time to Utapao. The next wave of 235 or more would then come to give us over 600 Marines on the island by dark.

The 175 can secure themselves, with gunships and tactical air. When the second group arrives, we can cut off the neck of the island and move out.

President:

I understand our time for this is 1845, but that it is already the 15th over there. Is that 0645 or 0745 over there?

Jones:

It is about 0545. It is around sunrise.

Here is a picture of the island. The Marine in charge has reconnoitered it.

A close check indicates an open area with trails leading into the woods. This is the preferred landing zone. Also, they might land on the beach. It is wide enough. It is the only opening on the island. Later, we would want to cut the island in two.

With somewhat over 600 Marines by nightfall, we should have a good feel for what is there.

We can perhaps withdraw the next day. We could bring the Marines out to the CORAL SEA. This gets them out of Thailand. Or, of course, we could go back by Thailand.

Tactical air based in Thailand would provide most of the cover. It has the gunships and the riot control agents.

That is the operation as we recommend it, as a joint recommendation from all the Joint Chiefs.

President: What about the CORAL SEA and B-52's?

Jones: There are three targets:

- First, the airfield at Kompong Som.
- Second, the naval port.
- Third, the regular port.

There is not much to hit on the airfield. There is not much around the naval port. Greater targeting is around the other port. We have found two ships of unidentified registry, with other craft around also. There are about 10 boats there. Eight of them look like fast patrol craft; one is unknown; one other is a medium landing craft.

President: Where are they located?

Jones: They are along one dock.

There are buildings, POL, and other things in the area.

If we choose to apply the B-52's, we could put three on one target, three on the other, and six on a third. This would cover the area of the targets.

President: Does this include the breakwater also?

Jones: We would cover the breakwater in one portion of the target area. But it would be very difficult to damage it. You would have to have a direct hit.

The B-52's would take about six hours from Guam. They fly at a high altitude so there is no threat to them.

Vice President: I thought they would be on their way by now.

President:

No.

Schlesinger:

No. We just put them in readiness.

With a unit of three aircraft, there would be about 125 weapons. The concentration is in the center. They would probably not hit the breakwater.

Jones:

As for the CORAL SEA, it has about 48 aircraft. About 100 smart bombs are available, such as laser guided or Walleyes. They could be used with great precision. We would first send armed reconnaissance and then go for heavy targets like construction, POL, the warehouses, etc.

Admiral Holloway:

We have 21 F-4's, 24 A-7's, and 6 A-6's. There are 81 guided munitions on the CORAL SEA. They are about halfway split between laser and the Walleyes.

President:

What will be the extent of the damage from the CORAL SEA as compared with the B-52's?

Jones:

With the bombs from the carrier you could take out key targets. With the B-52's, you get more bombs, interdiction of the runway and of the port, etc. We would get additional buildings, including collateral damage.

The key targets you could get from the CORAL SEA. With B-52's, you will get mass.

President:

What would be the altitude?

Admiral Holloway:

About 6000.

Kissinger:

How is the weather?

Admiral Holloway:

It is now suitable. It might be cloudy from time to time, but not for long.

Jones: The prediction is for patchy areas.

With the CORAL SEA, we would have a continuous flow shifting from target to target.

Kissinger: How long will the operation continue?

Jones: From about 2250 tonight until the end of the day (6:00 a.m. tomorrow).

Kissinger: How many aircraft?

Jones: About 70 percent of the aircraft. We would use a lot at first, and less later.

President: They could reload and come back.

Jones: That's right. They could recycle.

Turnsfeld: What is the purpose of having it go 8 hours?

Jones: To hit all the targets. It could be less.

Kissinger: Would we keep it up while the Marines are on the island?

Admiral Holloway: The operation on the island is being supported from Thailand. We would have, from the CORAL SEA, a number of aircraft and targets.

You would have, with those aircraft, enough to hit all the targets?

Jones: Not the breakwater or the runway, but everything else.

Vice President: But they would have time to get all the ships into action. As it stands now, the B-52's would not get there until later.

Jones: We could start from the CORAL SEA earlier.

Kissinger: I have a question. You are landing on the island at 6:45 a.m. and on the ship at 8:45 a.m.; could they not sink the ship?

Jones: As for the island, our timing decision is based on the capacity of the helicopters and on the cycles we need to run. It is already sliding slightly.

Kissinger: This helps you with the bombing.

Schlesinger: That has already slid.

Vice President: Then you won't get all the Marines from Thailand?

Schlesinger: We cannot. There are 1200 of them.

President: Is this your recommendation on how it should be handled, and is it just a matter of time?

Jones: We would need to get the order out as soon as possible.

President: They should launch both operations as quickly as possible.

Admiral Holloway: At first light.

Jones: That's right. But that may be a moot question.

We will have good communications in order to be able to follow everything.

Clements: On the HOLT, let's be specific. We are supposed to have real time voice, as well as two-minute interval coded communication.

President: How soon do you estimate that the three helicopters, with 63 Marines, will be airborne?

Jones: It should be within an hour.

President: They are about 40 minutes behind your schedule.

Jones: They should still make it.

Kissinger: They are leaving simultaneously.

Jones: The HOLT is first.

(At this point, Admiral Holloway leaves the room to communicate instructions.)

President: Now, regarding the B-52's and the CORAL SEA.

Jones: There are various possible times on this.

Marsh: Are you taking the island to get it or the people?

Schlesinger: Because of the people there.

Rumsfeld: We will plan to take off from the island in 24 hours.

Kissinger: I would not answer how long we will stay there. We should say that we will try to find our people. We are not sure how long it may be.

Rumsfeld: Privately, we should say we will not stay long enough so that we would lose face and have to get off too late.

Kissinger: There is no point in staying on the island after we have searched it for our men. But I think we should not assure anybody ahead of time when we will leave. We will move at our own pace.

Schlesinger: What about any prisoners we take?

Kissinger: I would keep them.

Colby: Remembering what happened at Son Tay, I would say that we are planning to look for people who might possibly be there. We should not be too positive that they are there.

President:

The point is that we are going there to get our people, not the island.

Jones:

With the CORAL SEA, one suggestion that has been made is to issue an ultimatum that would say that within so many hours, unless you tell us you are releasing the Americans, there would be air strikes. We could also do that with the B-52 strikes.

Rumsfeld:

Regarding the ultimatum, I think there are three ways to do it:

- First, publicly.
- Second, privately or diplomatically.
- Third, you can get into a taffy pull with the people on the scene.

I think one and three are bad ideas. The best is the second. It must be specific and must have a diplomatic initiative.

Kissinger:

We sent a message to the Secretary General today. We could not get a better way to communicate with the Cambodians.

That message was delivered at one o'clock.

We thought of giving an ultimatum in Peking, but it is too complicated in terms of the time involved.

Schlesinger:

How about a local ultimatum?

Kissinger:

I have no objection. But I do not believe that our action should be dependent on an ultimatum.

Fundamentally, the purpose of our strikes is to protect our operations. I could be talked into taking out the 100 aircraft at Phnom Penh, but I do not want to upset people too much.

But we should move massively and firmly. We should say that we are going to protect the operation to get out our people.

Buchen:

I do not agree. If they are not there on the island, you then issue the ultimatum.

President:

Supposing we do not find them all? If the operation is carried out in proper time sequence, they will land on the island at 1845 and on the HOLT earlier. (Points to General Jones' chart) On the schedule you have there, the CORAL SEA is about two hours after the HOLT, and about 4 hours after the island operation. In that space of time they can find out whether the Americans are on the ship or on the island.

Kissinger:

The first group cannot search.

President:

No, but it can perhaps find out if the Americans are there. That gives us some flexibility.

But I do not think we should delay. I think we should go on schedule. Then, whether or not we find the Americans, you can strike.

Buchen:

But an ultimatum may be the only way to get the Americans out.

Kissinger:

Rather than have an ultimatum, I would advance the strikes.

I think it is essential in situations of this kind to make clear that it is we who define the hazards. We can argue that we are doing this to protect our operation. What we have to get across to other countries is that we will not confine ourselves to the areas in which they challenge us.

So I think we should do the strikes at the time of the operation. Then, if we have not found our people, we can mine or do other things.

We can also issue an ultimatum. We can say that the 100 aircraft was a protective operation. Of course, we would have some difficulties with people on the Hill and with others.

Colby:

The problem is that the KC could put 2,400 people on that island within 4 hours, if they are not blocked.

President:

So we have two reasons to speed up the CORAL SEA operations, so that its first attack coincides with the attack on the island and on the ship. If we use the CORAL SEA, you are then using it to protect the people on the operation. Second, if you use the CORAL SEA with the smart bombs, you are hitting military targets and you will not possibly do harm to Americans.

Rumsfeld:

There are only 80 smart bombs.

Jones:

But we have other armaments.

Buchen:

You have two neutral ships. With an ultimatum, they have a chance to get out.

Jones:

I suggest we expedite the CORAL SEA as soon as possible. It cannot go before the other operations, but at the same time. It would go after mobile targets at first, and other targets later.

Rumsfeld:

The logic is to protect the operation.

Buchen:

But we should avoid the neutral ships.

President:

If they are Cambodian ships, we should sink them.

Schlesinger:

The leak regarding the B-52's is not too bad. It shows that the President will use them if necessary.

President: I think you should reexamine the CORAL SEA operation with the expectation to keep it going. Henry, what do you think?

Kissinger: My recommendation is to do it ferociously. We should not just hit mobile targets, but others as well.

Schlesinger: We will destroy whatever targets there are.

President: And they should not stop until we tell them.

Buchen: You have the requirement for consultation with Congress. If you hit buildings, you might hit Americans.

Schlesinger: I think they would have moved the Americans 20 miles inland as soon as possible.

Admiral Holloway: If we now go to use the CORAL SEA it will hit before we take the ship. The first wave will hit targets connected with the operation. Later waves will hit other targets, including the three that we have discussed: the airfield and the ports.

Schlesinger: They cannot fracture the runways.

President: Can you get the boats?

Schlesinger: That is possible.

President: I think we should hit the planes, the boats, and the ships if they are Cambodian.

Schlesinger: We will make a positive identification that they are Cambodian.

Admiral Holloway: On the first operation, the fighters will come back and report. First, you can go for the runways; second you can come back with the required strikes.

Schlesinger: How soon?

Holloway: Three hours.

Schlesinger: That would be about 7 o'clock.

Kissinger: They should not strike at the mainland before the HOLT can get to the ship.

Schlesinger: So we will go with a 2045 time.

Admiral Holloway: O. K.

(Admiral Holloway leaves again to pass on instructions.)

Schlesinger: Is there any change in our estimate regarding the forces on the island?

Colby: No.

Hartmann: Do we have any estimate of American casualties?

Jones: It is very hard to make a precise estimate. We do not know what there is. Saying that there would be ten people killed would be too precise.

Schlesinger: It might be 20 to 30.

Clements: Sooner or later you will get a linkage with the 23 already lost at NKP.

President: Any other questions?

Schlesinger: We are in position to do the SAR operation. If we hit again Kompong Som, will our people go in over land if they are hit?

Jones: We will have SAR aircraft. They could go down over land. It is conceivable.

President: What is the distance between the targets and Kompong Som itself?

Colby: About 15 kilometers.

Jones: About 10 miles.

Rumsfeld: Did you say that the Marines could be recovered on the CORAL SEA? Is this an option?

Jones: No plan is yet finalized.

Kissinger: They could go on the HANCOCK.

Rumsfeld: Our preferred option is not to have them return to Thailand.

President: According to the schedule, the HANCOCK will arrive at 0400 on Friday. It could be the recovery vessel for the Marines being taken off.

Schlesinger: Augmenting the B-52 picture of being ready is that we are continuing to amass forces.

Rumsfeld: We should not announce the termination.

President: Will the WILSON link with the HOLT?

Jones: Yes; also the CORAL SEA. The HANCOCK may be delayed. Even so, we will not take the Marines back to Thailand.

Rumsfeld: Did you decide on an ultimatum after the strikes?

Kissinger: We could use bullhorns to inform the Cambodians on the island. They should not negotiate. They should just state our demands. I think that once we start we should finish and get out.

Ingersoll: Shouldn't we remove the Marines out of Thailand once the operation has been launched?

Schlesinger: It is not necessary.

Ingersoll: We will have riots tomorrow.

Jones: We have 1200 at Utapao. I suggest we undertake an airlift to get them out, once we decide we do not need them.

Kissinger: Then we can announce that we have withdrawn them.

Buchen: I have not understood how Henry (Kissinger) is planning to proceed.

Kissinger: I think it will not work unless we hit. Then we can give an ultimatum that is credible. We have many things we can still do later. We can mine, or we can take out the planes at Phnom Penh. Then we will be in a long test. We will not have gained by not hitting Kompong Som.

Rumsfeld: Tomorrow Congress is back in session.

President: We have a lot of activity going. Let's see it then.

Kissinger: We should not give the impression that we will stop.

Hartmann: How will the Cambodians know what to do if they decide to let our people go?

Jones: We will have a bullhorn. We can tell them what to do.

Kissinger: The odds are that the people of the island have no orders and will sit tight.

Clements: I don't think the Americans are there anyway.

Kissinger: They could be. We do not know.

President: We are speculating on how many there were in the ship that got away.

Colby: The pilot said he saw eight or so. He said there were others in the HOLT. He speculated it might be the full 39.

Jones: We should word our release carefully so we say that we want to remove the Americans and get information on their whereabouts. There may also be value in capturing Cambodians.

Kissinger: The problem is that we do not know that they are not there. Taking the island if they are not there is easier to explain than failing to take it if they are.

Hartmann: Could a gunboat carry 39 people?

Colby: Yes.

Jones: We should say that we wanted to get the Americans. Even if we did not get them, it would be useful to talk to the Cambodians to find out what they know.

Kissinger: We should have one clear line of this.

Colby: We need to be braced against that pilot.

Schlesinger: We have an obligation to get the Americans or to see if they are there.

Rumsfeld: We need to make plans on press handling between now and midnight.

Hartmann:

We should talk a little about Congressional consultation.

Last night, we gave the leadership information on your actions. They agreed. They said that they were advised, but not consulted. We reported the attacks to them. Again, they supported you. Today, in the House, people are saying that there was no consultation under the War Powers Act.

I have a summary of the Congressional response. I also have a summary of the House and Senate responses to our statements. During the afternoon, it was agreed to provide limited briefings to the House and Senate Foreign Affairs Committees. They want more information. We are sticking to the leadership. We have not expanded on the earlier material.

The question now is what notification and consultation should proceed. There is a suggestion that you call Mansfield and Albert, but then others will be mad.

We can bring the people over here, or we can call them.

President:

What does the law say?

Buchen:

The law says to consult before the introduction of forces and then to consult regularly. There is also a requirement for a report 48 hours after an action. We have to get that report in tonight.

Kissinger:

When did this action start, from the legal standpoint?

Buchen:

When you got the gunships in.

Kissinger:

Maybe you should get the leadership in tonight.

Buchen: That is what the Congress really wants.

President: How soon could they be down here?

Marsh: By 6:30 p. m.

Rumsfeld: As I understand it, consultation means telling them in time so that they can oppose the action. But we cannot worry about it, though they will complain that it is not consultation.

Kissinger: I think we should give them the history of the diplomatic effort. We should tell them that there was no response and that we had to go ahead. I do not think we should give them details on our strikes.

President: We should say that we will land on the ship and on the island.

Rumsfeld: From the political standpoint, we should get your friends and brief them, so that they can stand up and fight for you.

President: Jack (Marsh), can you ask them to come down here? Whom would you ask?

Marsh: I would ask the leadership, such as the Speaker, the Floor leaders, the Whips, and others. I would also get the Foreign Affairs and Armed Services Committee leaders and ranking Minority members of both Houses.

Rumsfeld: I would do Anderson separately, perhaps at 7 o'clock.

Schlesinger: The plans regarding air strikes should be presented to show that the targets will be carefully selected. We should not just talk about "a few" strikes, but about "selective" strikes.

I would recommend that the Republican leadership be among the group you are briefing.

Kissinger:

But we must ask them to keep quiet. They will be briefed before the operation starts.

Vice President:

Perhaps 10 o'clock would be better.

Kissinger:

How about 10 o'clock?

President:

Would it be to our benefit to delay?

Buchen:

I would not.

Marsh:

The statute says to consult before initiation of action.

Vice President:

You have already done that.

Marsh:

But we have not yet told them that we are executing.

Vice President:

What if the group is opposed? What should the President do?

Kissinger:

He would have to go ahead anyway.

Vice President:

I was asked today by a business group when you would react. They applauded when I said that you would be firm.

President:

I have had similar reactions.

Kissinger:

What about informing the public? Should we use national television?

Hartmann:

Perhaps after it's over.

Kissinger:

Let us do the beginning low key, and then go to a fuller description. Perhaps we should just do a brief announcement at first.
(To Schlesinger) I thought your statement read well.

Rumsfeld: You do not want to look as if, in being firm, you are being crimped by the Congress.

Regarding the B-52's, the Congress would say you should not use them. Then you stand them down, as if in response to Bella Abzug. Should we perhaps stand them down now?

Kissinger: I would ignore Bella and then explain the B-52's. If it works, it will not matter. If not, we will have other things to worry about. You will look implacable and calm and in control.

Perhaps you should give a ten-minute speech.

Hartmann: How about other countries?

Kissinger: That is a good idea.

Rumsfeld: You should let NATO know, for once.

Hartmann: Are there any press on board?

Kissinger: (To Ingersoll) We should get Sisco to organize messages. We should not use SEATO.

Vice President: I think that's good.

President: What do we want when the leadership is here?

Kissinger: I think we should have no military men, but just Jim and myself. I could brief on the diplomatic steps. You would say what you have ordered.

Schlesinger: What should we say?

Kissinger: We should tell them about the island, about the ship, and about the related strikes on military targets to make the operation succeed.

Rumsfeld: The first question will be, will the Marines land on the island.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET / SENSITIVE

MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

PART I OF III

Date: Thursday, May 15, 1975
Time: 4:02 p.m. - 4:20 p.m.
Place: Cabinet Room, The White House
Subject: Seizure of American Ship by Cambodian
Authorities

Principals

The President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General David C. Jones
The Director of Central Intelligence William Colby

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll
Defense: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
WH: Donald Rumsfeld
Robert Hartmann
NSC: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft
W. Richard Smyser

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4.

MR 92-10 #26 NSC Ltr. 10/7/94

By KBH NARA Date 2/6/95



President: Will you tell me where we stand at this time?

Colby: I can give you a report on foreign reaction. I think it would be better if George could give you a wrap-up on our operation.

President: Please go ahead.

Colby: Mr. President, we have no reactions from Communist authorities in Phnom Penh to the U.S. military operation beyond what we had last night. In his statement on Phnom Penh radio at that time, Information Minister Hu Nimm was noticeably defensive in rationalizing the seizure of the vessel.

Although he did claim that the MAYAGUEZ was on an intelligence mission, he stated several times that his government had no desire to stage "provocations" and that the MAYAGUEZ had only been halted for "questioning."

In the aftermath of the U.S. military operation, the Thai cabinet today apparently decided to expel a "senior member of the U.S. mission," and to recall the Thai ambassador in Washington for consultations.

Thai newspapers today are also urging that the government:

- publicize all agreements between the U.S. and Thailand, and
- immediately close down all U.S. bases in Thailand.

Leftist politicians are now holding a rally in Bangkok. They reportedly intend to demand that all U.S. troops leave Thailand within 10 days.

The political left apparently believes that the time is right to create a political crisis for the Khukrit government.

Organizers of the demonstration plan to move crowds to both the prime minister's office and the U.S. embassy.

The Thai military leaders, on the other hand, have privately continued to support the U.S. actions.



In Peking's first reaction to the U.S. military action, Vice Premier Li Hsien-nien has accused the U.S. of an "outright act of piracy."

Speaking at a banquet in Peking today, Li said that "when an American ship invaded Cambodia's territorial waters, Cambodia took legitimate measures against the ship to safeguard her state sovereignty." Li added that "the U.S. went so far as to make an issue of the matter" and bombed Cambodian territory and ships.

Li said the American action "should be condemned by world public opinion."

Hanoi radio has characterized the operation as a "flagrant act of piracy" which shows that the U.S. still has not "learned from its defeats in Vietnam and Cambodia."

The new government in Saigon has not commented, but it can be expected to parrot Hanoi's line.

Soviet media continue to report the events surrounding the MAYAGUEZ incident from foreign wire services without editorial comment.

East European commentary remains muted. The Yugoslav press has even referred to the MAYAGUEZ as a "kidnapped" U.S. vessel.

The Cuban press has so far treated U.S. actions in a factual manner, but we have no comment since the U.S. operation was completed.

A Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman has stated that "a container ship on open waters must not be subject to seizure" and that his government viewed the U.S. military action as "limited."

In most major Western countries there has been little official reaction.

British and West German press comment has been generally supportive.



Press reaction from South Korea, Taiwan, and Australia has been favorable.

Ingersoll: Bill Rogers spoke to the OAS Ministers while they were here, including the one from Panama. He said they were very pleased.

President: Jim, I would like to congratulate you and your whole Department for a job well done.

Have we had any report on the damage so far?

Jones: Not yet. We can summarize the claims, but we are not sure that they are accurate. Here is a photograph. It is the first one that has yet been received here. It shows the buildings around the airport before and after they were damaged. We understand that the damage reported on the aircraft was extensive.

President: Which airport was this?

Jones: The airport near Kompong Som, called Ream.

Kissinger: Were any boats sunk?

Jones: Yes, but we don't yet know how many.

We have no Navy reports yet, just the Air Force. We need to survey all the aircraft involved in the operation.

Kissinger: Were the aircraft used land aircraft?

Jones: No, only the CORAL SEA aircraft were used against Kompong Som. There were four waves. The first was armed reconnaissance. They did not expend ordnance. They found the shipping of other countries and did not want to take the risk. The three subsequent waves went against the airport, against the POL facilities, and against support facilities.

We put 240 Marines on the island, in total. We put 40 aboard the ship.



We lost three helicopters in the operation. The equipment took a lot of battle damage.

Our casualties were 1 killed in action, 1 missing, and 30 wounded. That is considerably lighter than we thought last night.

President: Are all the Marines now on the CORAL SEA or on the HANCOCK?

Jones: They are on the CORAL SEA. We had a reserve of 1,000 on Thailand. But when the ship's crew was returned, we stopped any more Marines going to the island. Then we put in another 80 in order to help the Marines that were there to extricate themselves.

President: I heard that the Marines on the HOLT had gone to the island.

Jones: No, they did not have their full equipment.

Clements: How many helicopters were inoperative?

Jones: We got down to four Air Force helicopters and three from the CORAL SEA. So there were only a few for the Marines who were left there. We thought we might have to keep people overnight on the island. But that was only the impression in Washington. They continued the flow of helicopters and they also used several boats from the destroyer, so that they were able to extricate all the Marines.

Kissinger: How many Cambodians were on the island?

Jones: We do not know, but they were obviously well armed with supplies. They put up a lot of fire against the helicopters.

President: That is probably why they moved the ship to that island from that other one where they had it.

Kissinger: Where did the boat carrying the crew come from?

Jones: From Kompong Som.



Kissinger: This indicates that the operation was really centrally controlled.

Jones: They brought a message that they had been sent out on a Thai fishing vessel in order to be returned, and they asked us to stop the bombing. We had one or two more runs, but we stopped shortly thereafter.

Kissinger: How many aircraft were used altogether?

Jones: About 32 to 40.

Schlesinger: Not the 81 that had been on the carrier.

President: Henry, would you step out for a moment?

(At this point, the President and the Secretary of State stepped out for about 3 minutes. They then returned.)

President: Jim, I would like a full factual report giving a summary and chronology of what happened. It should include orders, summary results, photographs, etc., and indications of what we did when.

Where is the ship now?

Jones: She is on her way to Singapore. We towed her for some distance but then she was able to get up steam and she wanted to go to Singapore.

President: It was a job well done. Let us now go on to the next item on our agenda.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

May 19, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *30* *MA7*

SUBJECT: Debrief of the MAYAGUEZ Captain and Crew

We have received a report (TAB A) of the debrief of the MAYAGUEZ Captain and crew, including chronology of events and a report of Singapore developments regarding the ship.

Chronology

The MAYAGUEZ Captain and crew present the following sequence of events (all times in Washington EDT):

- The vessel was challenged and stopped by a Cambodian gunboat off Poulo Wai (see map at TAB B).
- Their engines stopped at 0021 on Monday, May 12. They were, however, able to send out several distress signals.
- The gunboat crew that boarded the vessel ordered the Captain to proceed to Kompong Som, which he refused by claiming his radar was broken.
- The MAYAGUEZ remained at anchor off the island of Poulo Wai from 9:00 a.m., May 12, until 9:30 p.m. that evening, and was then instructed to proceed to the island of Koh Tang.
- The crew observed reconnaissance aircraft before "nightfall" Cambodia time (or by dawn EDT).
- After the vessel had moved to the vicinity of Koh Tang, an English-speaking Cambodian came aboard and asked the Captain about the ship's mission and about whether it carried military cargo. The Cambodians even brought the Captain, the Chief Engineer, and several crewmen back to the vessel the following night to open locked rooms for the Cambodians to inspect. But U. S. aircraft dropped flares which frightened the Cambodians and they turned away from the vessel.

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
NSC Memo, 11/24/78, State Dept. Guidelines
By *let*, NARA Date *12/26/99*



- After the ship had arrived at Koh Tang, the personnel were taken off the ship to the island and were put aboard a Thai fishing boat. That is when they first observed U.S. tactical aircraft.
- The Thai fishing boat proceeded to the mainland about 7:00 p.m. on May 13. U.S. aircraft tried to intercept the boat, "placing weapons with great accuracy" (in front of the boat) and also using some type of gas which made all aboard the boat vomit. Several U.S. crewmen sustained burns. A second gas attack followed about half an hour later. The boat almost turned back but was forced ahead at gunpoint by the Cambodian guards.
- When the crew landed at Kompong Som, they were asked by another English-speaking Cambodian about CIA or FBI affiliation and about arms shipments. The Cambodians still appeared to believe that the ship had military cargo.
- The Captain tried to negotiate their release, telling the Cambodians that if the crew was released he would intercede with U.S. authorities not to take military action.
- The Kompong Som commander said he would pass this information to the Phnom Penh commander, and indicated that the crew would probably be released at 7:00 p.m. May 14. The Captain and the Chief Engineer were told that they (though not the crew) could return to the ship, but no boat was available and they decided to stay on Koh Rong Sam Lem (an island about 10 miles from Kompong Sam) for the night with the crew.
- At 6:30 p.m. on May 14 the crew was ready to return to the ship. They got on the Thai boat and, after the Cambodian guards left, they made and displayed white flags so that U.S. aircraft could recognize them. The Master said that an American reconnaissance aircraft observed them (he did not say when) and apparently recognized them as white men. They pulled up alongside the USS WILSON at about 11:30 p.m. and then proceeded to the MAYAGUEZ at 1:05 a.m. on May 15.
- The crew was unaware of the U.S. Marines landing at Koh Tang until they were on the USS WILSON.



SECRET

-3-

Developments at Singapore

- The Captain gave a press conference at which he thanked you and the American military forces for our actions, saying that if it were not for the efforts of the U.S. military the crew "would be in prison or dead now."
- The press zeroed in on the question of whether the Marine landing had taken place after the crew had been released.
- The Captain said that he had received substantial offers of money for his exclusive story of the incident but replied that any money should go to the wounded Marines.
- The Chief Engineer, in a private interview, said that he believed U.S. commanders must have known the crew was not on Koh Tang Island but on the boat returning to the ship. He also said that the Captain had assembled the crew before docking at Singapore and they had all agreed to present one story to the press, praising U.S. Government actions in securing their safe release.
- The Captain also said that the crew had not been mistreated by the Cambodians.

Comment:

- The account given by the MAYAGUEZ Captain generally substantiates the chronology that we have been able to develop. It shows that the vessel actually remained near its point of capture for 21 hours before it was moved to Koh Tang Island. It also shows that the crew was released before our Marines landed on the island, though not before they left their stations or before you made the decision to proceed with the landing.
- The account does not, however, offer any explanation of what motivated the Cambodian authorities. They appear to have hoped-- or perhaps expected--that they would find evidence of a spy mission or military cargo. This may explain why they originally wanted to take the boat to Kompong Sam. But they did not search the vessel thoroughly when they boarded it and were rather easily dissuaded afterwards.

SECRET



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-4-

- The account also suggests that the Cambodian authorities had decided to release the boat and crew well before the crew was actually permitted to leave, but it does not explain why they did not announce the release in advance or even when it was made.
- From the Captain's account, it appears that the decision to release the vessel and crew was not triggered by our military actions on Wednesday evening (EDT) but was probably tied to the threats of those actions and to growing American military presence and activity. That is, presumably, why the Cambodians responded to the Captain's offer to turn off the American military if they released him and the crew.
- The account given by the Chief Engineer, which was given in a private interview and will presumably be published later, may produce some further questions about our knowledge of the crew's actual movements. He apparently thinks we knew more about the crew's whereabouts and movement than we did.
- The Captain appears to be a remarkable man.

Attachments

TABs A and B

SECRET



NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLYACTION

July 15, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER
FROM: W. R. SMYSER
SUBJECT: The Situation in Asia

About a year and a half ago, I sent you a memorandum in which I said that the nations of Asia were adjusting well to the Nixon Doctrine and the different American presence.

It is a remarkable testimonial that this remains true, though not as much as before, even after recent events in Indochina.

Most nations in Asia apparently believe that revolutionary warfare of the Vietnamese model, like a car accident, is something that happens to other people. Therefore, they do not feel quite as discomfited by some of the "lessons of Indochina" as one might suppose they should.

On the other hand, they are worried about North Vietnamese expansionism, which they quite accurately regard as having been the principal determinant of events in Indochina. They are also worried about the danger of increased Russian and Chinese activity, though they still regard these in rather amorphous terms.

The crucial ingredient, in the future as in the past, is what the United States will do. Virtually every Asian Embassy in Washington is spending more effort on the Hill because they recognize the growing importance and growing independence of the Congress. But they still look principally to the Administration, not only because of past associations but because they believe that the Administration remains the center of policy-making.

Even those countries that are most concerned about our determination and our capacity to sustain an effort will still work with us largely because they see little other option. This may have elements of whistling in the dark but, from their standpoint, it seems the most reasonable course.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY - XGDS

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo. 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines

By KQH, NARA, Date 1/14/00

The nations that have been most affected by events in Indochina have, of course, been those who have ^{been} most closely associated with us; e. g., Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines.

-- The Koreans remain most anxious to work with us because they see no other option (and, in fact, they have none until Pyongyang changes courses or until Peking and Moscow break loose from Pyongyang).

-- The Thai are unable to make up their minds between efforts at accommodation -- for which they would have to expel us -- or between a neutral formula -- for which they would need to keep at least some American backing. Since few of them see the problem in these terms they tend to vacillate and posture.

-- The Philippines are in the peculiar position of wanting a firmer commitment while reducing our overt presence. But their basic objectives are not hostile to our interests.

What is most noteworthy is that countries like Malaysia, Australia, and Singapore seem to be turning to us more than before, even after Indochina. One can adduce some complex reasons for this, which are not worth elaborating, and I suppose one might term it the "reverse domino" effect as countries that felt safe now begin to wonder.

Policy

As for policy, I think we can set a fairly straightforward general course but the application will be tricky in a number of countries.

-- Generally, we clearly must stay and help those who want our assistance as they appear genuinely to do.

-- Thailand, I think we can and should ride with the storm and cut our forces, if necessary completely, so as to avoid providing cheap issues. The problem is to do it in a way that does not discourage our friends and to accompany our military departure with an increase in other forms of collaboration as well as in aid.

-- In the Philippines, I see no reason to keep sovereignty over the bases but I recognize the problems this might create for you in Panama.



-- In Indochina, I am in no hurry to proceed back though I think we should keep a mission in Laos as long as decently possible as a morale booster for the Thai.

-- In Korea, I think we are on the right course of making our concern shrilly known. But I see little beyond stalemate, unless and until Moscow and Peking change their attitudes. Bringing about such a change should be a major objective.

-- In Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, the best we can do is to expand military aid. It is what they need and what they will appreciate.

-- As for the rest, our course is generally set and will probably work if we can keep control.

One specific recommendation is that we seriously consider having the President visit Manila, Jakarta, and Singapore on his way from Peking. I have discussed this with Brent and with Phil. I was against it until a month or two ago but have begun to change my mind for three reasons:

-- First and most important, the President does very well on these trips. They will help us in Asia, and will cheer over friends.

-- Second, the Chinese cannot really object because they want to keep us in Asia.

-- Third, it will reduce the pressures on him for immediate results, whatever they may be, in Peking.

I recognize the disadvantages, including the risk of over-commitment and the danger that a jealous opposition here will reduce aid money to undercut the President's impact. But I think we should study such a trip seriously.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you authorize the NSC Staff to prepare a study on having the President visit Manila, Jakarta and Singapore on his way back from Peking.

APPROVE _____ DISAPPROVE _____

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY - XGDS



MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

2638

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

INFORMATION

May 10, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT *B*

SUBJECT: Life Inside Cambodia



Our Embassy in Bangkok has prepared a comprehensive report on "Life Inside Cambodia" (Tab A) based on numerous interviews with Cambodian refugees who have fled to Thailand and on information available from intelligence sources. The report indicates that the Cambodian Communists are radically reconstructing that country using extremely harsh and brutal methods to implement their policies. Some of the more notable comments which the report makes are:

-- Since January 1 the Communists have executed former teachers, students, and even low ranking enlisted men of the Lon Nol military forces. Moreover, anyone who shows any sign of being educated also risks arrest or execution.

-- Executions are reportedly widespread and in many cases members of the entire family of former government officials or soldiers are executed along with the head of the family. Almost all executions occur in the same manner: several Communist cadre beat the person to death with hoe handles or other blunt instruments.

-- The regime is extremely anti-intellectual. One former school teacher described book burnings in Phnom Penh following the Communist takeover including one instance in which the entire contents of the National Library were destroyed.

-- Education has virtually ceased to exist save for some ideological training for children between the ages of 7 and 12.

-- Organized religion is being eradicated. Monks are forced to do work in the fields. Most pagodas have been either dismantled or are being used for other purposes such as to store grain.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines

By *KSH*, NARA, Date *1/20/00*

-- Virtually everyone has been made a member of a "production cooperative" and forced into agricultural work. To exert control over the population, the Communists have divided cooperatives into ten-man and ten-woman work groups. These groups are further subdivided into three person cells with the tenth person serving as group leader. Each person within a cell is responsible for the other two and should any one member flee, the remaining members of the cell may be executed.

-- Work hours are from dawn to dusk and sometimes even longer. In one province people worked by torchlight after dark until 9 or 10 p.m., and slept at the work site so they could begin work early the next morning.

-- Standards of health have declined drastically and disease is rampant. There are widespread epidemics of malaria, dysentery, and cholera in various parts of the country. Remaining medical facilities are open only to Communist cadre. Most doctors are no longer allowed to practice but are either forced into manual labor or executed.

-- In several areas the family unit is being destroyed with children permanently separated from their parents and husbands and wives placed in separate work groups.

The Embassy report concludes that Cambodia is under the control of a xenophobic collective leadership dedicated to attaining a radical change in the social, political, and economic makeup of the country in the shortest time possible. In its determination to achieve results, it appears willing to use any means possible. Other reports reaching us confirm the level of brutality which this Embassy Bangkok aigram portrays.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

INFORMATION

July 10, 1976

Handwritten initials "AP" and "H" in dark ink, written over the date and stamp area.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT

SUBJECT: Escape from South Vietnam

Our Embassy in Bangkok has compiled information (Tab A) on the most recent instances of Vietnamese refugees fleeing from South Vietnam. Since the risks involved are so serious and the sacrifices so large, I thought you should have this brief summary of the report.

The Embassy states that even now, more than one year after the fall of Saigon, the flow of refugees from South Vietnam continues. More than 400 persons are currently at ports in Thailand hoping to continue on to the U.S. or other countries following their escape by sea. Others are in Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and even Brunei.

These refugees have told Embassy officers that escape is a risky undertaking requiring preparations carried out in utmost secrecy over a long period of time. Gasoline required for the long journey is scarce, expensive, and rationed and therefore must be obtained in small amounts and kept hidden until the day of escape. The most dangerous part comes when the escapees must rendezvous, load the supplies undetected on to the boat, and then somehow evade the constant coastal security patrols. The refugees say that new laws in South Vietnam prohibiting meetings in groups of three or more people make these efforts even more difficult. Finally, if the people do get past the patrols and out into the open seas they find themselves in the hostile environment of a vast ocean with frequent storms and dangerous currents.

Apparently most of those starting out to flee do not make it. Some refugees estimate that about one half are caught by authorities before they can get under way and perhaps one third of the remainder perish at sea. Our limited intelligence reporting confirms that some groups have been captured.

CONFIDENTIAL GDS

KBH 2/10/00

CONFIDENTIAL

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One of the most interesting cases detailed in the Bangkok report involved a former ARVN officer who had become a shrimp fisherman. For nine months he carefully saved the food and fuel needed for the journey and learned the timing of security patrols. On the appointed day in mid-May he brought his small fishing boat into shore and loaded 23 people on board including 7 children. The boat, never designed for the high seas and powered by an engine with only two working cylinders, was so overcrowded that the passengers could not lie down. The only map available was a page torn from a travel brochure which contained a four inch map of the entire South China Sea. In the six days and nights it took them to get to Thailand, they survived one severe tropical gale and several lesser storms during which everyone had to bail water to keep the boat from going under.

Another fascinating case is that of a refugee who first escaped from Vietnam months ago, entered the U.S. refugee system and settled in Brooklyn. After obtaining travel documents here, he traveled to Thailand where he lived on a boat and secretly returned to Vietnam. In Vietnam he assembled 16 members of his family, developed an escape plan, and then successfully sailed back to Thailand once again.

In a separate episode, a Communist coastal patrol intercepted a boat at sea and placed an armed crew on board to bring it back to Vietnam. As the boat was making its way into port, the unarmed escapees, including women and children, rushed the crew, threw them overboard, and then steamed off for Thailand.



CONFIDENTIAL

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:02 P.M. EST

NOVEMBER 5, 1976

FRIDAY

MR. NESSEN: You heard the beginning of the Cabinet meeting. After the pool left, there was a continuation of the meeting, and it had mostly to do with the President indicating to the Cabinet what he expected of them between now and January 20. He indicated that he plans to submit a budget for the fiscal year beginning next year, and also the economic report and a State of the Union Message.

He said, "I expect us to carry on until January 20 with the same philosophy, the same programs, and the same policies. The country cannot afford for us to stand still."

Then the President announced that he had appointed Jack Marsh, his Counsellor, to be his chief representative in dealing with the transition and that Jack would be assisted by Jim Connor, the staff secretary, and Mike Duval, a Special Counsel to the President. The President also suggested that as time goes by, it will probably be necessary for each department to appoint its own transition officer to deal with the counterparts in the Carter group, and he mentioned, for instance, that Kissinger had already -- you are not taping the briefing, are you?

Q I am sorry. I didn't know it was against the rules.

MR. NESSEN: I think we better stick to the regular briefing rules for a while.

The President pointed out that Dr. Kissinger, for instance, had already named Larry Eagleburger as the transition officer at the State Department. Then, the President said, "We will make it as smooth and helpful as possible," referring to the transition. But, the President did point out that he and his Administration have total responsibility for running the Government, making the decisions, until noon of January 20.

After that, there was pretty much an informal give-and-take between the Cabinet members, talking a bit about what transpired in the past two years, and some of the things that some of the Cabinet members thought would be coming along in the next period of time. Then the President went around the table, shook hands with each Cabinet member and exchanged a few private words with them and then left the room.

Q How long did it last?

MR. NESSEN: It was a relatively short meeting and was over at 25 minutes after 11:00.

Q It started at 11:00 and went to 25 after?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Were there any absentees?

MR. NESSEN: I am told Frank Zarb and Russell Train were the only two absentees, and both of them are out of town. I didn't see Elliot there. I know the Under Secretary of Commerce attended, and I don't know why, but we can check on that.

Q This is not his last Cabinet meeting, is it?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is not.

Q He will be holding others?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, he will.

Q It was not a farewell to the Cabinet?

MR. NESSEN: No, it was not a farewell to the Cabinet members. There are plans to hold other Cabinet meetings.

Added to the schedule today at 2:30 is a meeting with the Vice President. As you know, they have a regular weekly meeting, and this is a regular weekly meeting. I don't have the agenda for you, but normally they talk about some of the various projects and groups the Vice President is involved in.

On the Palm Springs trip, we will pass out a summary schedule showing press check-in on Sunday. Running through briefly, the President plans to leave Andrews about 1:00 p.m. on Sunday. Mrs. Ford and Susan will fly out with the President. The arrival of Air Force One at the Palm Springs Municipal Airport is 3:00 Pacific Time.

The press plane will depart Andrews at 12:15 and you should check in for the press plane at 11:30 on Sunday.

While he is in Palm Springs, the President will stay at the residence of Leonard Firestone. You probably know Mr. Firestone is the American Ambassador to Belgium. The home is located on the 13th fairway of the Thunderbird Golf Course.

The President will pay for the house, as he has during all past vacations. I don't have the exact amount because it has not been determined yet. Ambassador Firestone is not in Palm Springs, and he and his family, I understand, are still in Brussels.

As for the return, the President will be coming back to Washington on Monday, November 15, leaving Palm Springs early on Monday morning Palm Springs time and getting back here toward the evening at Andrews. The exact times have not been put together yet.

The press will be staying, as they did last year, at the International Hotel. The press filing center briefing room will be in the Convention Room of the International Hotel. I don't anticipate very much business out there. The President really is going primarily for a rest. I am sure he will be playing a good deal of golf. I don't plan to brief every day. Obviously, we will have whatever announcements as to the President's schedule and Government business will certainly be made every day.

I would think the President would spend up to several hours on Presidential business each day, including transition plans. I think he does plan to spend some of the time out there thinking about his own personal future plans. There will be some work on the budget and on the State of the Union Message and, as I said, golf.

The two other Ford children, Steve and Jack, will be coming along to Palm Springs sometime during the week, but I cannot give you right now their exact arrival time.

Q Who from the staff will be going along?

MR. NESSEN: Myself and Dick Cheney, Major Barrett, Terry O'Donnell, Red Cavaney and Dr. Lukash.

Q The transition team will stay here?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

The transition meeting, which you probably have heard about elsewhere, between Jack Marsh, Dick Cheney and Mr. Watson of the Carter staff, at the request of Governor Carter, is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. today in Dick Cheney's office. This will be the first sort of formal and direct contact on the transition between Carter's transition person and the White House. What the agenda is for that, how long it will last, what they will discuss, we just don't have any idea right now.

Q Will we see them afterwards?

MR. NESSEN: It was not planned to, no.

Q Maybe you could ask them.

MR. NESSEN: I certainly will.

Q Who will be in charge of the transition for the National Security Council?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know who has been put in charge of that but I will check -- if anybody.

Q Did the President tell the Cabinet members to appoint these people, or did he say it may be necessary? Did he suggest that they designate one in the event they are needed?

MR. NESSEN: Each department should name a transition officer.

Q What was the President's reaction to the unemployment figure increase?

MR. NESSEN: The pause seems to be lasting longer than we had anticipated. Other parts of it-- I mean, if you look into the details of the figures, there are some good signs there. The payroll employment continues to go higher if you adjust it for strike activity and the total man hours continues to increase. We also expect home building and capital goods orders to accelerate the recovery during 1977.

Q Ron, what was the President's reaction to Governor Carter's press conference last night?

MR. NESSEN: I didn't hear him have any, Les.

Q He didn't watch it?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he watched it or not, but he didn't have any reaction to it if he did.

Q Was there any discussion at the Cabinet meeting about the unemployment figures?

MR. NESSEN: No, there was not.

Q Will there be any rethinking of policy because of this continuing pause?

MR. NESSEN: I just can't give you an answer to that today. I don't have any answer.

Q Ron, have you heard anyone discuss the possibility of the President's economic advisers and Carter's, some representatives of the President-elect, getting together to somehow do something on the economic front to make certain that perhaps confidence is not lost?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard that discussed, Aldo. I do know that the President feels, and others here, that this Administration, this President, has the total responsibility for running the country until noon on January 20, and if I understood Governor Carter correctly at his news conference, he shares that belief.

Q Mr. Seidman told us here the other day that he would seek to bring in some of Governor Carter's budgetary people to work with this Administration on the budget.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I have not heard of any working together on the budget. Certainly, each department and agency is going to, as the President said, be helpful in helping the new people learn how that agency functions and, presumably, that includes helping the Carter people to learn how a budget is put together. But I have not heard any talk about the Carter people participating in the budget-making process.

Q This will be Gerald Ford's budget?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, as is traditional, Saul.

Q That is legal, of course, but there will be no input from the Carter people or, for example, cutting the defense budget?

MR. NESSEN: Certainly I have not heard that discussed. This is a traditional Ford budget.

Q Do you think he will send Kissinger on a mission to Geneva or to the Middle East before the end of the year?

MR. NESSEN: Not that I know of.

Q Last night Governor Carter said a tax cut early in the year is a very strong possibility if the economy doesn't perk up. I am wondering, in view of what Mr. Ford was saying during the campaign about asking Congress again for his \$10 billion tax cut that he sought this past year, will the President give full support to that notion or not?

MR. NESSEN: Well, the President said during the campaign that when Congress returned it would have on its desk a \$10 billion tax cut proposal, and he certainly intends to go through with that commitment. He will send a proposal to Congress to cut taxes an additional \$10 billion.

Now the motivation behind that proposal is, again, as he spelled out during the campaign, two things: One, to ease the burden, what he believes to be the excessive burden of taxes on the middle income group; and, secondly, to give business incentives to expand their plants and build new plants in ways that create jobs.

So, those are the two purposes of the proposed tax cut, and he will indeed go ahead and keep his promise to propose an additional \$10 billion tax cut.

Q To follow that up, Carter stressed last night if he went along with the idea it would be to stimulate purchasing power by consumers. Are there really any differences between Mr. Ford and Mr. Carter?

MR. NESSEN: I am giving you the rationale that the President feels justified in asking for the tax cut and that is what he said for months, which is, to ease the burden on the middle income taxpayer and give business incentives for new jobs.

Q Part of that tax cut proposal is the increase in the personal exemption, is it not?

MR. NESSEN: From \$750 to \$1,000 is the method he proposed.

Q How much of the \$10 billion would result from that one device?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have that for you today.

Q Isn't this tied to a \$10 billion cut in spending?

MR. NESSEN: The President intends, as he said himself this morning, right up until noon of January 20, to continue to pursue his own policies and philosophy and programs, and one of those is to cut the growth of Government spending so the budget he sends up will reflect that. It will further restrain the growth of Government spending.

I can't give you the figure right now, but he intends to do that.

Q Ron, after noon on January 20, after that time, will you be working for the President or will you be working somewhere else?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. I think I have 65 weeks of unemployment insurance coming. (Laughter)

Q Have you had any other job offers?

MR. NESSEN: Nobody has called, Les. I have been sitting by the phone ever since, and I haven't had a single nibble. (Laughter)

THE PRESS: Thank you.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

GDS

URGENT ACTION

December 10, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR BRENT SCOWCROFT

FROM:

WILLIAM GLEYSTEN

SUBJECT:

Recommended Phone Call to INS Commissioner
Chapman re Indochina Refugee "Boat Cases"

Your intercession is needed with General Chapman, Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, to insure that he approves a State Department request to admit an additional 100 Indochina "boat case" refugees a month beginning this December. These refugees are in an extremely precarious situation because governments in the region often refuse to allow them to land and force them back out to sea. U.S. willingness to accept some of them may cause these countries to allow the refugees to land temporarily, thus removing them from danger.

Background

We still have one outstanding problem regarding Indochina refugees which requires immediate government action. Since the end of our evacuation program, over 4200 people have successfully escaped from Vietnam by sea (the so-called "boat cases") and made it to various ports in Southeast Asia. Approximately 2200 remain unsettled and approximately 500 more are fleeing each month. The refugees have to save gasoline and money for months in order to try to escape. They often have no navigational aids other than a map from a tourist brochure. If they make it past Communist patrols (and the estimates are that well over half do not), they then must face the dangers on the high seas. Most often their engines break down and they run out of food and water. Some have sailed too close to Cambodia where they have been arrested and summarily executed.

For the small percentage that survive all of these difficulties, their problems are only beginning because non-Communist states in the region have been unwilling to accept them on a permanent basis and often refuse

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GDS

KBSH 3/1/00



NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

~~SECRET~~ GDS

March 31, 1976

National Security Decision Memorandum 322

TO: The Secretary of State
The Secretary of the Treasury
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: American Equipment Captured in Indochina

The President has considered the recommendations of the Senior Review Group concerning American equipment captured in Indochina. He has determined that United States objectives concerning this equipment will be to discourage Vietnam from selling it by taking a public stance against the sale; to do what we can discreetly to help those countries that support U.S. policies if they decide to purchase equipment from Vietnam and to take all feasible measures to impede sales to others. The Department of State will develop an appropriate public statement indicating that the United States looks with disfavor on the sale of this captured equipment by Vietnam.

More specifically, we will pursue the following course of action:

- The basic approach of the United States concerning Hanoi's possible sale of this equipment will be one of quiet cooperation with those countries friendly to the United States who are potential purchasers. The United States will not actively promote such equipment acquisitions, however.

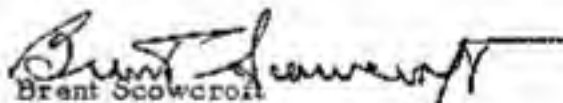
Subject to GDS of E.O. 11652
Automatically Downgraded at Two
Year Intervals and Declassified
on December 31, 1984.

~~SECRET~~ GDS

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- The United States response to requests for spare parts and technical service support will be determined on a case-by-case basis, and in accordance with our bilateral relations with the foreign governments concerned.
- In return for United States cooperation concerning spare parts and technical service support, the foreign government concerned must agree to treat the equipment as subject to the same United States Government controls as are applicable under the Foreign Military Sales Act with respect to use and disposition.
- We will not authorize private transactions by U.S. firms, or by persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction. The Department of the Treasury, in coordination with other interested agencies, will be responsible for developing the regulatory definitions, procedures, and restrictions necessary to implement and enforce this policy.
- The Department of State, in coordination with the Department of Defense, will administer United States cooperation with foreign governments concerning this equipment.
- Any United States agreement to cooperate in the provision of spare parts and technical services with a specific foreign government purchasing this equipment will require White House approval.


Brent Scowcroft

cc: The Attorney General of the United States
The Director, Office of Management and Budget
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff



4680

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~ - XGDS

October 22, 1974

National Security Study Memorandum 213

TO: The Secretary of Defense
The Deputy Secretary of State
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Administrator, Agency for International Development

SUBJECT: Review of U. S. Assistance Policy and Programs for the Republic of Vietnam

The President has directed a comprehensive review of U. S. assistance policy and programs for the Republic of Vietnam. The study should examine current assistance policy and programs and possible alternative programs that could be pursued over the next five years.

The study should be accomplished in two parts.

Part I - Intelligence Appraisal

An intelligence appraisal of the internal and external military and political factors that may be major influences on the Republic of Vietnam during the next five years should be prepared. This appraisal should analyze anticipated enemy military, political and economic capabilities, objectives, and strategy in the Republic of Vietnam and the impact of other nations' probable actions toward Vietnam. The appraisal is intended to serve as the basis for a review of U. S. assistance policy and programs, their effectiveness and possible alternate courses of action.

This portion of the study should be performed by the intelligence community under the direction of the Director of Central Intelligence and be completed by November 5, 1974.

Part II - Assistance Programs Review

Drawing on the analysis prepared in Part I, the study should (a) identify GVN capabilities to meet the threat to its security, (b) identify U. S.

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Authority NSC 640, 10/9/98

By LE NUS Date 11/2/98



military and economic assistance objectives, (c) assess the effectiveness of current U.S. assistance programs, (d) identify options for achieving U.S. assistance objectives over the next five years and (e) examine alternate sources of external assistance, where required. This portion of the study should include, but not necessarily be limited to, consideration of the following:

- Projected alternative South Vietnamese force levels required to meet the threat identified in Part I and the impact of these levels on the viability of the Vietnamese economy and prospects for its development.
- An assessment of the GVN's ability to counter anticipated enemy strategy at various possible levels of military and economic assistance.
- The extent to which changes in GVN domestic economic policy or military strategy can make up for resource shortfalls in the face of the threat.
- Alternative organizational structures for administering U. S. economic and military assistance.

The study should present options for GVN economic policies and U. S. assistance policies which would complement each other and alternative aid flows from U. S. and third country sources to support those policies over the five year period. These options should be stated in sufficient detail to form the basis for appropriate programs to secure legislative approval and the support of other nations.

Part II of the study should be prepared on a closehold, need-to-know basis by an Ad Hoc Group comprising representatives of the addressees and the NSC Staff, and chaired by the representative of the Secretary of State.

The completed study should be submitted by November 29, 1974 for review by the NSC Senior Review Group prior to its consideration by the President.


Henry A. Kissinger

cc: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Director, Office of Management and Budget

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~ - XGDS

